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FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD; AND ASSISTANT-MASTER IN RUGBY SCHOOL

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1871

PREFACE.

THE metrical translations in this volume to which the initial "S" is appended, are taken, by the kind permission of their author, from an anonymously published work * by the present Lord Bishop of Salisbury and former Head-master of Winchester College, under whose instruction I made, as a boy, my first acquaintance with that poetry of Pindar, which has remained ever since among my favourite studies. For versions with no distinguishing initial I am myself responsible. Most of the latter have already appeared in my translation of the "Olympian and Pythian Odes" (H. S. King & Co., London: 1876).

On points of interpretation my chief authorities have been Boeckh and Dissen; of general history, Grote; of literary history, Bernhardy; of topography, Wordsworth, Clark, and Isambert ("Guide-Joanne, Grêce

* The Odes of Pindar translated into English Metre (J. Wells. Winchester: 1876).

et Turquie d'Europe"). Other obligations I have tried to acknowledge as they arose, in so far as this could be done without encumbering the pages with an abundance of notes and references.

For reasons which the reader will find explained in the body of the work, I have thought it desirable to treat of the separate Odes, neither in their chronological order, nor according to their traditional division into the Four Books of Olympians, Pythians, Nemeans, and Isthmians. But as the latter arrangement has been followed (I believe) without exception by editors and translators, it has seemed convenient that the Table of Contents should be followed by a further Table or Index, showing in what chapter of my book the chief mention of each Ode is to be found.

F. D. M.

RUGBY, 1878.

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PINDAR.

CHAPTER I.

GREEK CHORAL POETRY—ITS FORM.

THE poems of Pindar are the most considerable surviving specimens of the Choral Ode, an important and characteristic product of Greek genius, to which modern literature presents no exact analogy. Poetry in the modern sense of the word was only one of the elements which entered necessarily into its composition. With this were inseparably combined Music, both vocal and orchestral, and a third element, which, in default of a better name, may be called the Dance, but which differed wholly both in character and object from its modern namesake. The result was a complex work of art, of whose effect some idea may be formed by imagining the performance of a cantata, sung, in solemn or joyous procession, by a *corps de ballet* to the accompaniment of a moving orchestra of flutes and harps. The whole performance was, originally at any

rate, conceived and directed by a single artist, who thus combined the functions of librettist, composer, and ballet-master. And though in practice no doubt the poet, as time went on, more and more delegated the two latter sets of duties to subordinates, yet we find him to the last retaining a certain amount of responsibility and claiming a certain amount of credit, not for the verses only, but for the accompanying music and spectacle. It is to be noticed further that in this threefold combination the element of Poetry always maintained its supremacy, the Music and the Dance remained always in due subordination to it. Such a phenomenon as the modern Italian Opera has made familiar to us—a *libretto* overshadowed and made insignificant by the music of which it is the vehicle rather than the theme—would have shocked a Greek's sense of artistic propriety. "Songs," says Pindar,* are "lords of the lyre:" and as the lyre obeys the song, so the dance obeys the lyre,—"Golden lyre, the dancers' step lists thy bidding!" † The Greek Choral Ode required, then, not merely a combination of these three elements, but a combination of them in due subordination to one another, the Ballet adapting itself to the Music, and that again to the Poem, which was the groundwork of the whole structure.

Ancient authors classify, with great precision, but perhaps with an excess of subtlety, the various subdivisions of Greek Choral poetry. Originally, no doubt, the distinctions which they draw corresponded

* Ol. ii. 1. † Pyth. i. 2.

to real and essential differences of theme and treatment. The Pæan, for example, was originally a solemn hymn to Apollo sung to the monotonous and stately accompaniment of the ancient four-stringed lyre. The Dithyramb was once a wild improvisation in honour of Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, and was accompanied properly by the shrill and exciting music of the flute. These and other varieties of the Ode arose in different parts of Greece, and were marked by the special characteristics, and appropriated to the peculiar religious observances of the tribes with whom they originated. But, as time went on, the development of international festivals, and the ever-increasing intercourse between the different tribes of Greece, drew more and more the representatives of the various local schools of poetry into acquaintance and connection with one another. Then gradually each began to influence, and be influenced by, the art of its neighbours. The Pæan gained freedom and enlivenment from contact with the Dithyramb, the Dithyramb borrowed from the Pæan something of its sobriety and stateliness. The harp and the flute, no longer the badges of rival schools, combined in rich and effective symphonies, solemn or orgiastic by turns, according as either element was allowed to prevail in the combination. Thus, while retaining their original names, and enough of individuality in form for musicians to distinguish them, the various species of Choral poetry drew closer and closer towards a common type. We hear of "Hymns," of "Prosodia," of "Pæans," and "Dithyrambs," and fragments of each kind have been

preserved to us from the general wreck of Greek Lyric poetry. But we can see in these no very marked differences of theme, of style, or even of metre; and it is almost always impossible to decide to which class any fragment should be assigned, which we do not know, upon external evidence, to have belonged to one class and not to another.

A class of composition, originally widely distinct from both Pæan and Dithyramb, but which in time became, so far as we can judge, almost indistinguishable from either, was the so-called "Hyporchema" or Mimic-ballet. In this performance a narrative poem was sung (of course with musical accompaniment), while the dancers represented the action of the poem in a species of pantomime. The Hyporchema was thus, as it were, a link between Greek Choral poetry and the drama. It is impossible to determine how far exactly it differed from the later developments of the Pæan, since in this too the gestures of the dancers in some way illustrated the music and the poem. Perhaps we may get an idea of the difference by distinguishing sharply between the successive *sentiments* (hope, fear, triumph, &c.) expressed in a poem, and the *actions* described in it (as an attack, a repulse, a murder, a sudden discovery, and the like), and imagining the gestures of the Pæan-chorus as contrived to illustrate the former, and those of the Hyporchema to mimic the latter. There is no conspicuous dissimilarity of theme or treatment between the extant fragments of Hyporchemata and the other classes of Choral Odes. Narrative passages abound in the "Hymns" and

"Prosodia," no less than in the "Hyporchemata," and, for anything that we can see to the contrary, the pantomimic method might have been applied to the one as well as to the other. But it is clear that in all these matters the Greeks had a very nice sense of artistic propriety, and in the lack of more complete information, we must suppose that the gestures which were suitable to the lively and cheerful Hyporchema would have been considered unduly realistic, and therefore indecorous, in the solemn and magnificent "Pæan" or "Encomium."

To Stesichorus, a Sicilian poet of the sixth century B.C., Choral poetry owed the final arrangement of its metrical system. Thenceforward a perfect Choral Ode consisted of a succession of stanzas arranged in "ternaries" or groups of three, the first stanza in each group being called the Strophe, the second the Antistrophe, and the third the Epode. Any one of these stanzas, viewed in itself, seems quite irregular in its construction: it may consist of any number of lines up to a dozen or thereabouts, and these lines may vary indefinitely in rhythm and length. But on examination it will always be found, that an Antistrophe corresponds in rhythm—line for line, and foot for foot—to the preceding Strophe; and further, that *all* the strophes of any one Ode are identical in rhythm (so that, in fact, all the Strophes and Antistrophes are but repetitions of a single form of stanza), while the Epodes similarly correspond to one another, though they differ from the Strophes and Antistrophes. Every Ode accordingly, of whatever length, employs two forms

of stanza only; and if we represent one by the letter A and the other by the letter B, the successive stanzas of the whole Ode will be represented by the sequence AAB, AAB, AAB, &c. The *rationale* of this structure is simple enough. The Ode was to be sung by an advancing procession of dancers, whose dance consisted of a succession of similar figures, each figure being followed by an interval of rest. For the sake of symmetry it was arranged that each figure should be subdivided into two exactly corresponding halves, every step and gesture of the first finding its reflex in the second. The first half-figure was called the "Strophe" or Turn, the second the "Antistrophe" or Return, and the period of rest between the figures the "Epode"—*i.e.*, the *Coda*. These natural divisions of the dance were regulated by corresponding changes in the music: the melody which accompanied the Strophe would be repeated *da capo* for the Antistrophe, and a second theme would be introduced to fill the interval of the Epode while the dancers rested. The Poem, adapting itself to the requirements of this arrangement, assumed the form we have above described: the balanced rhythms of its Strophes and Antistrophes answering to the evolutions of the advancing dancers, while the Epodes were sung during their halts. In the "Pindarick" odes of Gray—*The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*—a similar structure has been applied with good effect to English versification.

In short processional Odes, circumstances sometimes made it unnecessary or undesirable that the progress of the Chorus should be broken by halts.

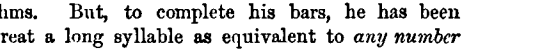
In these, accordingly, we find Strophes and Antistrophes, but no Epodes. An example of this is Pindar's Twelfth Pythian. Also the Dithyramb, in the hands of Lasus of Hermione, who is said to have been a teacher of Pindar, flung off altogether the fetters of Strophe and Antistrophe, with how much advantage to itself it is impossible, in the absence of evidence, to say. And the choruses of Attic tragedy (which were not independent compositions, but, as it were, choral fragments scattered over an otherwise non-choral work) employed, for some good reason doubtless, a far less regular arrangement of Strophes, Antistrophes, and Epodes. But apparently all other lofty forms of Choral poetry, and certainly all Pindar's finest Odes, adopted uniformly the threefold sequence of Stesichorus. That sequence, in its beautiful symmetry, and apparent intricacy yet real simplicity, is a truly characteristic product of Grecian genius and taste. Devised at first mainly with a view to the convenience of the dancers, it served also to break most agreeably to the ear the monotony of a long series of repeated stanzas and melodies. Like all that is best in Greek art, aiming at use, it produces beauty with it.

Little that would be interesting to the general reader is known as to the musical element in a Choral Ode. We have seen that it employed voices and instruments, both stringed and wind. Yet harmony in the modern sense seems to have been unknown to the Greeks. They combined bass and treble parts — or, as they called them, "male" and "female" — both in vocal and instrumental music, but apparently always in

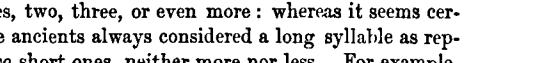
octaves. A modern reader, accustomed to the rich and delicate chords and dissonances of the music of our own day, or the magnificent contrapuntal achievements of Bach and Handel, will wonder at the seemingly extravagant language held by classical authors as to the effect on the emotions of men, and even on the character of nations, produced by mere unharmonised melodies, and those, according to modern ideas, of the most unimpressive kind. But if the Greeks were ignorant of harmony, their appreciation of pitch and rhythm seems to have been infinitely keener than our own. Some of their scales involving quarter-tones would baffle the most accurate of modern singers. And the rhythms of a Pindaric Ode would be incomprehensible to a modern audience, accustomed only to two-time, three-time, and their multiples.* Let any

* It is true that Mendelssohn, in his 'Antigone' and 'Œdipus' choruses, has employed modern musical notation to represent the sequences of long and short syllables in elaborate Greek choral rhythms. But, to complete his bars, he has been obliged to treat a long syllable as equivalent to *any number* of short ones, two, three, or even more: whereas it seems certain that the ancients always considered a long syllable as representing *two* short ones, neither more nor less. For example, a *trochee* (–⏑) in the Strophe may be answered occasionally by a *tribrach* (⏑⏑⏑) in the Antistrophe, but never by a *proceleusmatic* (⏑⏑⏑⏑), and so with other feet.

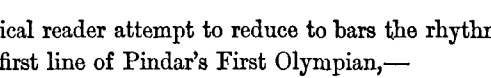
The Sapphic metre has been several times set to music by modern composers. But the rhythm of its three long lines is necessarily somewhat distorted in the process—usually thus:



instead of the original



musical reader attempt to reduce to bars the rhythm of the first line of Pindar's First Olympian,—



and he will see how subtle must have been the ears which could appreciate and enjoy such measures. Yet it is unquestionable that the Greeks *did* appreciate and enjoy them, and *did* sing melodies which no modern keyed instrument could reproduce, with the most nice distinction of the minutest intervals. It is then the less surprising, though it is surprising still, that they were contented in their music to gratify their sense of melody and rhythm, without exploring the mines of musical enjoyment which have been opened to modern audiences by the discoverers of counterpoint and harmony.

It may not be inappropriate to close this chapter with an extract from Pindar's First Pythian Ode, describing in a highly imaginative vein the soothing effect of the harp, not on human passions only, but on the wrath of gods, and even (as he fondly dreams) on brute and inanimate natures—the eagle and the lightning.

Strophe.

"Golden lyre, that Phœbus shares with the Muses violet-crowned!
Thee, when opes the joyous revel, our frolic feet obey.
And minstrels wait upon the sound,
While thy chords ring out their preludes, and guide the dancers' way.
Thou quenchest the bolted lightning's heat,
And the eagle of Zeus on the sceptre sleeps, and closes his pinions fleet.

Antistrophe.

King of birds! His hooked head hath a darkling cloud o'ercast,
Sealing soft his eyes. In slumber his rippling back he heaves,
By thy sweet music fettered fast.
Ruthless Ares' self the muster of bristling lances leaves,
And gladdens awhile his soul with rest.
For the shafts of the Muses and Leto's son can melt an immortal's breast."

By "the shafts of the Muses and Leto's son" (*i.e.*, Apollo), Pindar means the piercing strains of the lyre. Then in the Epode the measure changes—the dancers halt in solemn awe and expectancy, while the poet describes the opposite effect, the sense of horror and aggravated misery with which the music of the lyre strikes the ear of Zeus's enemies,—the foes of good, the vanquished giants of old, "dreeing their doom" in Tartarus, pinioned beneath the snows and fires of Ætna.

Epode.

"But, whom Zeus loves not, back in fear all senseless cower, as in their ear
The sweet Pierian voices sound, in earth or monstrous Ocean's round.
So he, Heaven's foe, that in Tartarus lies,
The hundred-headed Typho, erst
In famed Cilician cavern nurst,—
Now, beyond Cumæ, pent below
Sea cliffs of Sicily, o'er his rough breast rise
Ætna's pillars, skyward soaring, nurse of year-long snow!"

CHAPTER II.

GREEK CHORAL POETRY—ITS MATTER.

From the *form* of a Choral Ode we pass now to consider its *matter*,—the occasions which produced it, and the sources from which its themes were drawn. It might, perhaps, have been expected that these would have been identical, that the occasion which produced an Ode would itself have supplied the poet's theme, and that an Ode of Pindar, composed (let us say) to commemorate a chariot victory at the Olympian games, would have been occupied mainly with a description of the circumstances and consequences of the victory. But such, as we shall see, is by no means usually the case. The actual occasion of such a Triumphal Ode is sometimes touched upon so lightly, as to leave it open to dispute whether the victory which it commemorates was won at the Isthmus or at Nemea, at Delphi or at Thebes; whether the victorious car was driven by its owner or by a professional charioteer; whether the commemoration followed instantly upon the victory, or whether days, months, or even years had elapsed between them. These topics are not, indeed, actually excluded from the Ode. The poet touches upon them,

but as it were *en passant*, and usually by means of allusions, sufficient, no doubt, pleasantly to remind the victor and his friends of circumstances with which they were already familiar, but conveying little information to readers who know of these circumstances no more than the Ode itself tells them. Generally from the briefest notice of these points which would satisfy the poet's sense of the compliments due from him to his patron's achievements, the Ode passes with all convenient speed to a wholly different range of topics—to legends of ancient gods and heroes, moral reflections on every circumstance of human life, from the cradle to the grave, expositions and justifications of religious, social, and political creeds, from all which the poet only returns at rare intervals, and, as it were, perfunctorily, to his professed theme—the actual occasion of his poem.

These occasions were of every conceivable kind. Every circumstance of Greek life, civic or private, gave opportunity for a Choral Ode. The love of pomp and ceremonial was one of the most marked features in the national character of the Greeks; and in all their ceremonies an indispensable and prominent element was that of Music, in that wide sense in which the Greeks always used this term, including under it Poetry and the Dance. Was a temple to be founded, a magistrate to be installed, a distinguished athlete welcomed home from a successful visit to Olympia or the Isthmus, a local deity to be honoured at the annual recurrence of his festival,—the talents of the choric poet were at once in requisition. Kings and free

states not unfrequently maintained a troupe of professional singers and dancers, ready to undertake at the shortest notice the performance of the most elaborate Ode. It appears that similar troupes were sometimes attached to the service of an eminent poet, and were sent by him, with an Ode composed for the occasion, to attend public or private celebrations in foreign states. And such was the general musical culture of the average Greek citizen that, in the absence of professionals, it was sometimes possible to organise an amateur chorus willing and competent to undertake their duties. Other occasions there were of far different character, but equally demanding the services of the choric poet. The citizens of some distressed town, decimated by plague or famine, or alarmed by natural phenomena, which they took for portents, would endeavour to appease the offended gods by propitiatory sacrifices and the performance of a solemn Pæan. Or the kinsmen of some youthful warrior, fallen on the field of battle, and borne home a corpse to his weeping bride, would call on the poet of the day to grace the dead man's obsequies with his most pathetic dirge — strains which should, in the language of a Roman poet,*

> "Bear to starry heights away
> That Might, and Mettle bold, and golden Worth,
> And grudge dark Death his prey."

It is difficult to classify, according to any strict principle, all these various occasions; but we may perhaps distinguish among them three chief kinds, and group

* Horace, Odes, iv. 2.

the different species of Greek Choral poetry according as they were intended (1), to grace the services of religion, or (2) to do honour to distinguished men of the day, or (3) simply to heighten the pleasures of a banquet. To the first class will belong hymns sung at the regular festivals of the national gods, relating their titles, their attributes, and mythical exploits—Prosodia or processional-chants; Pæans—originally propitiatory hymns designed to avert from the state some specific calamity, but afterwards including songs of public thanksgiving—or prayers for the favour of a particular god at some special crisis in the fortunes of a state. It will embrace also the later and more solemn forms of the Dithyramb, and to some extent even the earlier, in so far as these were consecrated to the worship of Dionysus. The Parthenia, or maiden-hymns, sung by choirs of girls, seem to have been a branch of the Prosodia, and will naturally be placed in the same class. We hear also of Enthronismi, performed apparently at the erection of a new statue of a god in its appropriate niche in his temple. But of all this class of Choral poetry only fragments remain.

Our second class will include Encomia, or complimentary poems in honour of living princes and their exploits; Epinicia (closely connected with Encomia, and perhaps to be regarded as a branch of them), which celebrated victories in the various local athletic contests of the Greeks, and especially in the four great games;* also Odes for the installation of magistrates, a

* *I.e.*, the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian festivals.

specimen of which, by a fortunate blunder of a grammarian, has been preserved to us among Pindar's Epinicia, and now figures in his extant works as the Eleventh Nemean Ode. Lastly, we must add the Threni, or dirges, of which no complete specimen remains. Amid all the ravages made by Time on the grand fabric of Greek poetry, there is none, perhaps, more to be regretted than that which has destroyed for ever works embodying probably the deepest thoughts and loftiest aspirations of the Greek race on the subject of death and the life beyond it.

Of the third class, the most important seem to have been the Scolia, or cross-songs. To perform these the Chorus was divided, and the successive verses assigned to its different sections, so that the song appeared to travel backwards and forwards in a crooked track across the room. Such Choric Scolia were probably confined to the banquet-halls of princes. The ordinary Scolium, of which we hear so often in accounts of private entertainments, employed no Chorus at all. It was a mere *solo* performance, begun by one of the guests to the accompaniment of a harp, which he played himself; presently he handed the harp across the table to another feaster, who continued the performance, and so on. The Choric Scolium, on the contrary, required all the regular apparatus of a Choral Ode, the singers, the orchestra of flutes and harps, and the ballet.

The chief sources which supplied the themes of Choric poetry in its highest developments—the Hymn, the Pæan, and the Encomium—have already been in-

dicated. The chiefest of all was Mythology. In the ideal legendary world of gods and heroes, the Choral Ode in its perfection lived and moved and had its being. The loves and wars of deities, the fabled glories of old heroic houses—

> "Thebes and Pelops' line,
> And the tale of Troy divine;"—

such were the themes from which its poets mainly drew their inspiration. The princes and nobles, in whose honour Encomia and Epinicia were performed, boasted descent from the supernatural beings by whom this ideal world was peopled, and their exploits were described by the Choric poet, not merely as attesting their divine ancestry, but as, to some extent, lifting them into the world of gods and heroes, and making them partakers in its life. In the opening stanzas of the Sixth Nemean Ode, the physical and intellectual achievements of man are described as bridging over, in part, the gulf which separates him from the gods, whose blood he shares.

> "One is the race of men and gods: one womb
> Teemed with us all that breathe with vital breath.
> But oh, how widely severed is our doom!
> We naught, and good for naught;
> They—for their home the brazen heaven is wrought,
> A home that knows nor change nor death.
> *Yet somewhat we approach the immortal kind*
> *In stalwart strength and mighty mind.*"—(S.)

Accordingly, the exploits of a divinely-descended noble were regarded as the sequel and continuation of those

of his superhuman ancestor. The god is invoked to rejoice in his descendant's prowess, and the highest compliment which the poet can pay to the descendant is to recall the legendary achievements of the ancestor, and compare them with those of the descendant. Again, the misfortunes of ancient gods and heroes, and their ultimate triumph over them, are employed to console their supposed descendants for baffled projects, and to encourage them to new aspirations in the future. And if, as sometimes happens, the poet desires to convey to his patron some lesson of warning or advice which he fears may be unwelcome, a reference to ancient legends, and usually to those connected with the house or city of his patron, enables him often to point his moral under the guise of paying a compliment. We shall see hereafter how, in the hands of a great poet like Pindar, the legends of antiquity became a potent instrument for instilling lessons of practical and political wisdom, of morality, and of generous ambition, into the minds of his patrons. Less skilful artists doubtless employed the myths with less discrimination and less earnest purpose, using them merely as "purple patches" to conceal the nakedness of their fancy, and heaping them together without order or selection to swell their odes into the required number of stanzas. It is said by Plutarch that Pindar himself, in his early days, was jestingly rebuked by his countrywoman, the poetess Corinna, for a similar undiscriminating use of mythology. "One should sow," she said, "with the hand, and not with the whole sack." If this tale be true, he seems, if we may judge from his earli-

est extant ode, to have outgrown his fault before he reached the age of twenty.

The death of a good and great man was regarded by the Choric poet as an actual translation into this ideal world of gods and heroes. There he met with his divine and heroic ancestors, and thenceforward shared their life and pleasures. As might therefore be expected, the extant fragments of Pindar's Dirges deal chiefly with this theme. A mass of occult speculation on the life after death was preserved in certain secret confraternities among the Greeks, whose meetings were attended with the celebration of the rites called "Mysteries." These "mysteries" have been described as "a sort of Greek Freemasonry." It is not for those uninitiated in either craft to judge of the justice of such a comparison. It is believed that sundry fragments of Pindar's Dirges bear traces of the influence of these speculations. In others he seems to adopt a more popular and less lofty creed; and in one especially, which we will take this opportunity to quote, he pictures the righteous dead as enjoying a state of unalloyed felicity, which, as he describes it, is a simple idealisation of perfect earthly happiness such as the Greeks conceived it. Thus * he paints the life of the denizens of his "Earthly Paradise," for "earthly" we must own it to be:—

"On them the sun in his strength sheds light, while here on earth is night,
And in meadows of red roses lies the suburb of their town,
With fruits of gold and spikenard bowers o'ergrown.

* Fragment 94, Boeckh's edition.

And some in steeds and sports, and some in dice,
And some in harps have joy, and all wealth's flowers bloom ever there.
And fragrance spreads about their country fair,
As in the altar's dazzling flame they mingle all sweet spice."

As a companion picture to this, we may take a strophe from Pindar's earliest extant Ode, the Tenth Pythian. Here he is describing the bliss, not of the righteous dead, but of the happiest of living men, the wondrous Hyperboreans, dwellers "at the back of the North-wind," in a country visited by heroes like Heracles and Perseus, but to which "nor fleets nor feet" may avail to glide adventurous mortals.

"Nor at their customs stands
The muse aloof, but all around, the maiden bands
Dance ever to the sound of harp and shrilling fife;
Their locks with golden laurel crowned, they feast in careless joy.
Disease nor wasting eld may e'er their bliss alloy.
A consecrated race, remote from toil and strife."

Not dissimilar is the vision of a city in time of peace, sketched in a fragment of a Hymn by Pindar's contemporary and rival, Bacchylides.*

"But mighty Peace to mortals brings a dower
Of Wealth, and honeyed Music's every flower;
On carven altars then the fat of ox
Wastes in the yellow flame, and fleecy flocks;
And striplings' thoughts are bent on sport, and flute, and feast."

In other fragments of Pindar's Dirges we find allusions

* Bergk's Poetæ Lyrici, p. 966.

to the life after death as a period of probation, and of an "atonement accepted by Persephone," the awful mistress of the lower world. And elsewhere doubtless he introduced pictures of souls awaiting at the tribunals of Æacus and Rhadamanthus that unerring and inevitable sentence which should award to them, according to their works, an eternity of bliss or torment. And if the subject of a dirge had been an Æginetan of some great Æacid house, he would naturally (we may imagine) pass on to trace the legendary career of the hero, who had exchanged the sovereignty of Ægina for a judgment-seat in the nether world, and would show how the justice of his earthly life had fitted him to discharge the awful duties of judging the spirits in prison.

The Hyporchema or Mimic-dance seems to have been considered as a lighter and livelier style of composition than the Hymn or the Pæan. Yet its performance was connected with the services of religion; it was exhibited on occasions where we should rather have expected the performance of a Pæan, to avert the dreaded consequences of some supposed portent; it invoked the favour of deities, and related the adventures of heroes. One fragment of a Pindaric Hyporchema appears to narrate some exploit of Heracles (Hercules) of a literally bloodthirsty character.

"He drank them mingled in blood,"*

it begins, and then comes a description of the blows of his club "crushing through bones and marrow."

* Fr. 77 (Boeckh).

Another,* which we will quote entire, from a Hyporchema performed to appease the Sun-god on the occasion of a solar eclipse, gives a vivid picture of Greek superstition, and is alluded to (though not quoted) by the Roman Pliny.† The original poem is in a light and rapid metre, illustrating the close connection between the Hyporchema and the Dithyramb.

"Why, all-seeing light of the Sun, to mine eyes dispensing sight,—
Why hast thou stolen in daytime thy soaring orb from view—
And all to nothing hast brought the wings of human might,
And wisdom's paths—and speedest along a darksome way,
To bring to pass some marvel new?
Nay, in Zeus' name, I pray thee, bid that thy flying steeds
Turn to the weal of Thebes this portent in all men's sight!
Yet oh, if thou tellest of wars, or blight, or of whelming snow,
Or faction fell, or seas outpouring to drown our meads,
Or freezing of fields, or a summer bedrenched with furious rain,
Or if Earth thou'lt drown, and store it with new-made folk again,
'Mid my wailing fellows I'll bide the blow!"

As to the Scolia, or drinking-songs, we have seen that a choral treatment of them was the exception and not the rule. And probably, even when so treated, they made less use of the stores of mythology than the more serious classes of Choral poetry. Their usual themes would naturally be the praise of Love and

* Fr. 74 (Boeckh). † Nat. Hist. ii. 12.

Wine. Yet, since Love and Wine were personified by Greek fancy in Aphrodite and Dionysus, we need not consider even the scoliastic poet as wholly precluded from availing himself of the chief fountain of Greek lyric inspiration—the Myths.

Speaking generally, and not dwelling on unimportant exceptions, it may be stated that, whatever was the especial occasion of a Choral Ode, the chief materials of its themes were supplied by sources, of which all classes of Choral poetry availed themselves alike. And chief among these were the legendary world of gods and heroes, and the unseen world of spirits, which Greek religion conceived as embracing and underlying all the material universe.

CHAPTER III.

PINDAR'S LIFE AND BIOGRAPHERS.

It has seemed desirable to preface the story of Pindar's life with some account, however imperfect, of the general character of Greek Choral poetry. By realising the essential connection of its loftiest forms with the mysteries of Greek religion and the inspiring legends of the Heroic Age, we are enabled better to understand the peculiar veneration which the Greeks felt for their greatest choric poet. Plato * speaks of him as belonging to a class of poets who deserve the title of "divine." And it is clear, on abundant evidence, that he was generally regarded by the Greeks not simply as a great artist, but as an inspired and saintly sage, the author of works deserving a place beside those of Homer among the Sacred Books of the nation. This view of Pindar's character is illustrated by various legends, which we shall notice in their place,—legends which, however historically baseless, were repeated and believed all over Greece,—of a special and mysterious intercourse between the poet and the unseen world,

* Meno, 81 B.

and of marvellous signs of divine favour towards him manifested in his lifetime, and even after his death.

It seemed desirable also that the reader should form some preliminary idea of the great demand for choral poetry among the Greeks of Pindar's day, and the qualifications needed by a poet in order to supply that demand adequately. Such qualifications would include a familiar knowledge, both practical and theoretical, of the whole range of poetical, musical, and spectacular art, and of the methods by which each branch could be made to co-operate most successfully in producing a required effect. Further, the mythological treatment of his themes demanded from the poet a minute and comprehensive acquaintance with the whole body of Greek divinity, including not merely the legends common to the whole people, and the established articles of mythological belief stereotyped once for all by a Homer or a Hesiod, but the floating local traditions of every petty tribe, and town, and even family. And from this vast store he had to select with infinite tact and discretion, topics, not only suitable to his occasion, but adapted to please a mixed audience, whose peculiar religious and political prejudices and theories of orthodoxy in matters mythological he could not with impunity disregard. On two points at least we shall have gained light by considering the combination of gifts and training necessary to produce such artists, and the wide field of occupation which would be open to them when they appeared. For so we shall better understand how it was, that—unlike most Greek literary men of that day, unlike the great

tragedians and historians of Athens—the choral poets almost of necessity adopted their art as a regular profession, and derived from it, not fame alone, but a substantial livelihood. We shall also better understand the value set by their countrymen on the few really eminent professors of so difficult an art, and the eagerness of patrons to secure their services. And thus we shall be prepared to believe the stories preserved to us by Pindar's biographers, of kings and governments vying with each other to do the poet honour, and establishing with him relations of personal and quasi-political friendship.

We must accept the main outlines of Pindar's life as they are related by the somewhat questionable authorities to whom we owe all our evidence on the subject.

Pindar, they tell us, was a Bœotian, born either in Thebes or in an adjacent village, about the year B.C. 522. By a singular coincidence, the great master of the Dorian lyre was born during the celebration of the Pythia, the quinquennial festival of Apollo, the God of Delphi, whom the Greeks worshipped as the especial patron of Dorian nationality, of poetry, and especially of the lyre. This coincidence is known to us from Pindar's own express statement,* and it is almost the only fact of his life which can be regarded as unquestionably ascertained. His father's name was apparently Daiphantus, for Scopelinus, whom some authors treat as the poet's father, seems really to have been an uncle or stepfather who superintended his early musical edu-

* Fr. 205 (Boeckh).

cation. The family of Pindar boasted an early connection with Sparta, and a descent from the hero Ægeus. So he tells us in an extant Ode,*

"From Sparta springs my own ancestral boast, as legends tell.
Sprung from thence, to Thera's land
(Heroes of Ægid stock) my fathers came."

But elsewhere he claims as his ancestress the Arcadian nymph Metope, mother of Thebe the mythical foundress of the Theban nation: he tells us of

"My mother's mother bright, Stymphalus-sprung!
—Metope she, that Thebe bare."†

His family, it is said, were musicians by inheritance, and excelled especially in flute-playing, the national art of Bœotia. Through that country the river Cephisus ran into the Copaic lake, and both river and lake were celebrated for the reed-beds from which the Theban flute-makers obtained their materials.

Pindar rapidly learned all that Scopelinus could teach him, and was then transferred by him to study the lyre at Athens under the eminent Dithyrambic composer, Lasus of Hermione. At the age of sixteen we hear of him still at Athens, installed, it would seem, on his own account as a trainer of choruses. Between this period and the performance of his earliest extant Ode (B.C. 502) he returned to Thebes, and met, as was mentioned in the preceding chapter, the poetess

* Pyth. v. 68.
† Ol. vi. 84.—Stymphalus was a city of Arcadia.

Corinna of Tanagra. The story there related of her playful rebuke, "One should sow with the hand, and not with the sack," exhibits the poetess in the character of a good-natured superior. Other legends tell of a rivalry between them: we hear of musical contests in which Corinna was declared victor,—five times in succession, says Ælian;* "whereupon"—adds this author with delicious gravity—"he called her a pig!" Pausanias† suggests that the good looks of the lady had something to do with the judges' verdict; but remarks, too, that they may have preferred her dialect, as easier and more familiar, to Pindar's super-accurate Doric. A third and hardly consistent tradition tells us that Corinna blamed another poetess called Myrtis for daring, in spite of her sex, to enter the lists against Pindar.

At the age of twenty (B.C. 502) Pindar's reputation as a rising poet seems to have been fairly established. A prize in the Pythian games had fallen to a young Thessalian named Hippocleas, and a noble countryman of the victor, a member of the almost royal house of the Aleuadæ, invited Pindar to celebrate the success in a Choral Ode. This circumstance produced the Tenth Pythian, the earliest of Pindar's extant Odes. It exhibits little or no trace of the heedless youthful exuberance reprehended by Corinna in his earlier efforts. Its mythological element, if not introduced with quite the dexterity which delights us in his finest poems, is yet not excessive, and is pleasing in itself. Pleasing also is the address of the young poet to his

* Var. Hist. xiii. 24. † Bœot. xxii.

noble patron,* grateful for the opportunity of distinguishing himself, yet modestly conscious that he deserves the confidence placed in him:—

"In friendly Thorax rests my trust, who, toiling for my grace,
Hath yoked this car of song with steeds in fourfold trace,
And gives me guidance back for guidance, love for love."

By "yoking the four-horse car of song," the poet means in plain prose, "giving the commission to produce this Ode, with its four ternaries of Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode." From this time to the day of his death an endless succession of similar commissions streamed in upon him from all parts of Greece. His fame flew east and west, north and south, from Rhodes to Sicily, and from Thessaly to Cyrene on the far-off coast of Africa. The royal families of Agrigentum and Syracuse supplied him with liberal patrons, and he is believed to have been more than once received as an honoured guest in the palace of Hiero, who for eleven years, from B.C. 478 to B.C. 467, reigned in the latter city. Throughout this period, and for about ten years after it, Pindar's genius appears at its greatest height. Afterwards we seem to trace a certain decline of vigour. Yet there are noble passages in his later poems: and even the latest have their own peculiar charm of serenity and kindliness,—a tranquil sunset, as it were, succeeding not unmeetly to the fiery splendours of his noontide course.

* Pyth. x. 64.

Thebes, the native city of Pindar, continued to the last his home. There, beside the fountain of Dirce, the traditional site of his house was pointed out some six hundred years after the poet's death to the traveller Pausanias. Another Pausanias, it was said, had once sacked Thebes at the head of a Spartan army, but had spared the house which bore the inscription,

"Burn not the roof of Pindar the poet!"

Sober history indeed refutes this story. Pausanias did, it is true, in the year B.C. 395, lead a Spartan army against Thebes, but he retired baffled from before its walls, and forfeited his kingdom by his retreat. But there is no such reason for disbelieving the similar tale that the house of Pindar was spared by Alexander the Great,* when in B.C. 336 he destroyed Thebes, and sold its inhabitants into slavery. The English reader will remember the lines in which Milton has made this tale immortal:—

"The great Emathian conqueror bade spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground." †

In this house the poet lived and wrote, "drinking," as he tells us, ‡ "the pleasant waters" of the sacred fountain hard by. Once at least his relations with the rulers of his city became unpleasantly strained. In a poem composed for an Athenian festival his compliments to Athens provoked the jealousy of the

* Æl. Var. Hist. xiii. 7: Dio Chrys. Orat. II. de Regno: Eustath. Procem. 28, &c.

† Milton, Sonnet III.

‡ Ol. vi. 85.

Theban government, and a fine was imposed on the poet, which was paid by his Athenian friends. Yet his affection for his native town remained unaltered. In the opening of his First Isthmian Ode, he declares that the praise of his "mother Thebe" is, and must be ever, a theme to which all his other commissions must give way:—

> "Whate'er of toil my busy soul did weave
> To thy high call I yield.
> . . . . .
> Is there a theme so dear
> As parents' praise to children's ear?"—(S.)

He turned a deaf ear to the invitations of his friend King Hiero, who, we are assured, offered him an honourable position in Syracuse. The poets Simonides and Bacchylides were already domiciled in Hiero's court, but Pindar preferred his independence and his home in Thebes. "I would live for myself, and not for another," he said, when questioned afterwards on the subject.*

From his Theban home Pindar made frequent visits to friends in Ægina and elsewhere. He was present on several occasions at the festivals of Olympia, Nemea, and the Isthmus. At Delphi also he was a familiar guest with the priests of the temple, and an iron chair on which he sat to conduct his Hymns was long exhibited among the curiosities of the place. More than one foreign city complimented Pindar by appointing him their "Proxenus," an office regarded

* Eustath. Procem. 26.

always as conferring distinction on the recipient, with duties somewhat analogous to those of our modern "consuls." He was Proxenus for Athens, and also for some Achæan town,* perhaps Dyme.

In Thebes Pindar lived, and in Thebes he was buried, yet he died (we are told) in a foreign city. At the age of eighty (B.C. 442) he had left his home to attend a festival at Argos. And there, in the public theatre, surrounded by the favourite and most familiar associations of his life, the pageantry of religion and the "flower of music," the old man fell suddenly into the arms of a youthful friend, and expired. His daughters Protomache and Eumetis, who seem to have inherited some portion of their father's talents, conveyed his ashes to Thebes; and an ancient epigram commemorates the loudness of their lamentation, and pays a compliment to their musical attainments. Of his wife Megacleia, and his son Daiphantus, this epigram says nothing. Perhaps both were dead. There is a story of a proposed marriage between one of these daughters and a prosperous citizen. But the father's caution broke off the match. The suitor might be prosperous now, he said, but he was not the sort of man to prosper long. However, we hear of descendants of Pindar at Thebes at the time of its destruction by Alexander. So perhaps the father relented, or the lady may have found a more eligible suitor, or Pindar's family may have been larger than his biographers were aware.

The great poet was gone, but his fame survived him.

* Nem. vii. 65.

The Athenians raised his statue in their city; the Rhodians engraved his Seventh Olympian Ode in golden letters on the temple of the Lindian Athene. We have already noticed the preservation at Delphi of his iron chair; and there too, long after his death, a singular custom connected with the temple services guaranteed the continuance of his fame. Either, as some say, at every sacrifice the priest invoked the shade of Pindar to take his share of the offerings, or, according to another version of the legend, every evening as the temple was closed for the night the sacristan paused: "*Pindar to supper with the god!*" he cried. Then the doors were shut, and there in the solemn darkness of the sanctuary, screened from mortal eye by walls through which no window was suffered to admit, even in daytime, one ray of profane light, the god and his poet-guest, as was piously believed, sat banqueting together till the morning.

The authority of Chamæleon (circ. B.C. 330) is cited for the following legend of Pindar's boyhood: Tired with hunting on the slopes of Helicon, he had flung himself down to sleep, when a swarm of bees settled on his lips, and filled his mouth with their honey. Some accounts transform this incident into a dream. But in fact the myth, for myth it plainly is—an allegory of the simplest kind—is told, not of Pindar only, but of Homer, of Plato, and even of St Ambrose.*

* M. Villemain compares the well-known legend of Horace's boyhood, related by himself—Odes, iii. 4. We might add the tale of Stesichorus and the nightingale—Anthol. Gr. vol. i. p. 31 (Tauchnitz ed.)

Another yet more marvellous legend told how the god Pan had been heard by belated wayfarers singing a Pæan of Pindar's between the peaks of Helicon and Cithæron. His death was made an occasion for other myths. The oracle of Ammon promised him the greatest earthly boon, and his death was the fulfilment of the promise. The goddess of the nether world, Persephone, appeared to him in a dream; and, complaining that she alone of deities had been left unhonoured by his muse, added that he should praise her yet in the land of the dead. In ten days the promise was fulfilled. The poet died at Argos, and immediately after, his spectre appeared to an aged dame in Thebes, recited a new hymn to Persephone, some portion of which she was able to commit to writing, and then vanished for ever into the spirit-world from which it had come.

A late poet, Leonidas, sums his character up in a brief epitaph, which may be rendered thus:—

> "To strangers kind, yet to his townsmen dear,
> Pindar, the Muses' minister, rests here."

Such is the traditional biography of Pindar. But how much of it may be regarded as trustworthy? We might naturally have supposed that the contemporaries who cherished so proudly and so fondly the fame of Pindar, would have been careful to preserve and transmit to posterity a full and trustworthy record of his life. And, in fact, we possess at least four professed biographies of the poet, agreeing fairly even in their minuter details, and appearing at first sight to sup-

ply materials for a tolerably exhaustive and consistent memoir. But on closer examination we find that the evidence furnished by these biographies is by no means of such a character as to deserve unquestioning acceptance. The earliest of them can scarcely have been compiled before the eleventh century of our era —more than fourteen hundred years after the death of their subject. And though they clearly all embody a literary tradition of far greater antiquity, yet even this tradition cannot possibly be traced back beyond a period separated by at least a full century from the latest date which can be assigned for Pindar's death. The earliest authority to whom any of their statements can be traced was Chamæleon of Heraclea, a philosopher trained by Aristotle in that Peripatetic school which was the cradle of Greek literary biography. But Chamæleon himself belongs to an age separated by several generations from that of Pindar. His 'Book on Pindar,' therefore, even if it were still extant, would not possess the value of a genuine contemporary record. We should require to be satisfied, before admitting its authority, that it was based upon older and authentic accounts of the poet's life. But it is highly improbable that any such account *in writing* existed before the Peripatetic period. Chamæleon can scarcely have had before him much evidence beyond such as was embodied in oral traditions current among the learned of his own day. Pindar was, no doubt, to these something more than a mere name: they had a fairly distinct conception of his personality, and a general idea of the outlines of his life. But this

idea probably included as much of fiction as of fact. Some elements in it were derived, no doubt, from genuine traditions, handed down from father to son in the families of Pindar and his patrons. But others were due to faulty inferences from these traditions, or to misinterpretations of the poet's own language about himself, or to the existence among the Greeks of a certain stock of floating legends with a continual tendency to reproduce themselves in connection with the name of any illustrious poet—stories of juvenile triumphs, defeated rivals, royal compliments, besides more obviously mythical tales of divine apparitions, and of mysterious influences exerted by poets over the brute creation. A mass of such legend seems to have crystallised round Pindar's name almost in his lifetime, certainly before Chamæleon attempted to write his memoir. And considering that Chamæleon's purpose was probably rather literary than strictly historical, and that his 'Book on Pindar' was only one volume of a series, it is unlikely that in this case he took any special pains to sift his evidence, and distinguish in it the actual from the mythical. As a matter of fact, the one statement about Pindar's life, which was unquestionably derived by later writers from Chamæleon's work, is one of the most unmistakable myths in the whole story.

Chamæleon's book, however, seems to have long held its ground as the standard biography of Pindar. It supplied, no doubt, a starting-point for the researches of the Alexandrian librarian, Aristophanes (in the third century B.C.), to whom we owe our present arrangement

of the Odes. And probably it formed the basis of the lost 'Life of Pindar' by Plutarch, who flourished in the latter part of the first century A.D. Athenæus quotes it (about A.D. 230); and although of the extant "Lives of Pindar" only one—that by Eustathius refers to it by name, all probably derived from it, mediately or immediately, the greater part of their materials.

It is sometimes possible to verify and extend the meagre records of a poet's life, as presented to us in professed biographies, by a reference to occasional notices of the poet in the writings of other authors, or to internal evidences supplied by the poet's own works. But from neither of these sources can we get much information as to the life of Pindar. Herodotus quotes him, but tells us nothing about him. Thucydides does not mention him at all. Plato speaks in high terms of his writings, but has not a word to say on the subject of his life. Quite late writers, such as Plutarch and Ælian, supply an anecdote or a statement here and there; but on what authority we know not, nor, in any case, do they add much to the evidence of the extant "Lives." It is evident from this silence on the part of his contemporaries, and of the generation which succeeded them, that Pindar played no conspicuous part in the history of his times. The complaint of Plato,* that no Greek poet ever made his mark as a statesman, or soldier, or mechanical discoverer, is well known. There was exaggeration in it; but in the

* Republic, x.

main it was true, and the case of Pindar may serve to illustrate it. Nor can we with much confidence attempt to recover from the works of Pindar such an autobiography, all the more valuable because undesigned, as the ingenuity of modern critics has elicited from the fragments of Theognis. Of the scenes and places which he pictures in such vivid colours, we know not which he had seen in the flesh and which with the eye of imagination. If he describes himself as "guiding the bark of song" to Rhodes, or "shipping a cargo" of encomium for Sicily, or leading the revels "round Hiero's hospitable board,"—these descriptions may indeed be the poetical record of veritable travels, but we can never be sure that the apparent kernel of fact is, in truth, more solid, less ideal, than the imagery which invests it. A consistent Euhemeristic interpretation of a poet's allusions to his own movements would often lead us to strange results. Not every modern bard who tells us of his "slumbers on Parnassus' brow" can be inferred to have trod in fact the soil of Greece. Future biographers of the present Poet-Laureate will scarcely record for posterity, on the evidence of his own early poems, his marriage with "the gardener's daughter," or his visit to "Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold" "in the golden prime of good Haroun Alraschid."

Practically, then, our evidence for the facts of Pindar's life consists of four biographies, compiled fully fourteen hundred years after the poet's death, and forming the latest links in a chain of tradition which cannot be traced beyond the school of Aristotle. It is

impossible to accept such evidence without hesitation; but we have, in fact, no other. At least we may receive it as evidence, if not to the actual facts of Pindar's life, yet to the general impression produced by that life on the minds of succeeding generations. Questionable at best as records of the actual historical Pindar, these biographies represent to us at any rate the Pindar of tradition—Pindar as educated Greeks and modern scholars, following their lead, have been wont to picture him. The best of them, probably, and certainly the fullest, is that prefixed to his 'Commentaries on Pindar' by Eustathius, Archbishop of Thessalonica—a learned and laborious scholar of the twelfth century. A second, of unknown date and authorship, but probably not later than the last mentioned, is known as the 'Vita Vratislavensis,' having been found in an ancient manuscript at Breslau. A third is ascribed to Thomas Magister, a dull and blundering pedant of the fourteenth century; and a fourth—the oldest probably of all, but extremely meagre and unsatisfactory—to the lexicographer Suidas, of whom we only know that he lived at least as early as Eustathius, and at least as late as the close of the eleventh century. When the great modern scholar Boeckh published his magnificent edition of Pindar, the work of Eustathius had unluckily disappeared, and was supposed to have been lost for ever; but it has since been unearthed and made accessible to modern students, first by Tafel, in 1832, and again, in 1835, by F. W. Schneidewin. From the contents of these four biographies, and from

the scanty allusions to Pindar which are scattered over the Greek Anthology, and the writings of such late authors as Plutarch, Ælian, and Athenæus, is derived nearly all that modern research has been able to recover for us of the life of the Theban poet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUR GREAT GAMES.

With but few exceptions, the extant Odes of Pindar are devoted to the celebration of equestrian and athletic successes at one or other of four great national festivals. Fragments of his other writings show that he excelled in every branch of choral poetry; but of all his works, the Epinicia or Triumphal Odes were those which ancient critics most admired, and it is by these alone that modern readers can test his claim to a place among the great poets of the world.

Voltaire, it is said,* once made a great attempt to understand Pindar. But the gorge of the fastidious philosopher rose at the first crude notion which he formed of the subject-matter of the Odes, and of Pindar's relations with his royal patrons. He saw in Pindar only "an unintelligible and bombastic Theban, a poet of the boxing-ring, the first violin of King Hiero!" Eminent Frenchmen, when they give their minds to it, do contrive to express strange opinions on the literature of foreign nations, and of antiquity.

* Villemain, Essais sur la Génie de Pindare, &c., chap. x.

The late M. Thiers, when Mr Nassau Senior asked him, "Do you place Racine above Shakespeare?" replied that he only knew Shakespeare through translations, but that he *did* place Racine above Homer and Virgil! And admirers of Pindar may be consoled by remembering that the critic who dealt so severely with the Theban poet was no kinder to Shakespeare. "He has spoiled the taste of the [English] nation. He has been their taste for two hundred years; and what is the taste of a nation for two hundred years will be so for two thousand."*

The judgment of competent students will scarcely endorse the scornful criticism of Voltaire. Yet it must be owned that a modern reader, plunging without special preparation upon a study of Pindar's Odes, will be not unlikely to find himself, for a time at least, in sympathy with it. To appreciate Pindar, it is necessary to lay aside prejudices, to be prepared for surprises, and to hesitate before forming opinions fixed beyond the possibility of future modification. It is necessary, also, to have some preliminary notion of the ideas, the tastes, and the modes of life of those for whom he wrote. Undoubtedly, if his poems deserve immortality, this will be due to qualities in them independent of the accidents of time and place,—to their power of touching sympathies and appealing to instincts which are common to all men of adequate culture in every age and in every nation. But the surroundings of a poem are apt to distract attention from its deeper poetic qualities. And the latter, in the case of a poet

* See Carlyle's Frederick the Great, book xxi. chap. v.

whose whole style and subject-matter are influenced by his peculiar surroundings, will fail to exert their due effect on readers perplexed at every turn by allusions which they do not understand, sentiments into which they do not enter, and modes of expression for which nothing in their previous literary studies has prepared them.

"*Un chantre de combats à coups de poing,*" says Voltaire; and the modern reader, who finds that races, boxing-matches, and wrestlings do in truth supply the chief occasions of Pindar's poetry, will certainly be haunted with a feeling that no treatment, however skilful, could convert such occasions into suitable themes for lofty verse. How could they excite in a poet those deep and genuine emotions of which true poetry is the expression, and which in other ages have been awakened only by great national triumphs and reverses, or by circumstances of absorbing personal interest, the crash of empires or of creeds, the throes of political and religious and moral convulsions in nations or in individuals, the fervours of religion, the raptures and the torments of love?

To justify Pindar's choice of themes, it is not enough to show that there was a demand on the part of his patrons for poetry on such subjects. It must be shown also that athletic contests did, as a matter of history and for sufficient reasons, excite in the Greeks of his day a genuine enthusiasm, and invest themselves with associations which might well furnish matter for poetry. We may not, after all, find ourselves able to share this enthusiasm, but we shall be

less inclined to judge of it harshly if we can convince ourselves that it was sincere.

Now Grecian history supplies abundant proof that equestrian and athletic successes in the four great games of Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus, were esteemed even by statesmen and philosophers as events of serious importance, and that not merely to the individuals who obtained them, but to the states whom these individuals represented. Solon, the great Athenian reformer, offered the enormous reward of 500 drachmas, equivalent to one year's income of an Athenian citizen of the wealthiest class, to the winner of a prize at Olympia, and 100 for a victory at the Isthmus. And it is actually stated that this was a *reduction*, and that before Solon's time the public rewards of victors were even larger.* We hear also that a certain Cylon, who made an unsuccessful attempt to establish himself as tyrant of Athens, backed by a powerful array of kinsmen and admirers, owed much of his influence to an Olympic victory; and that he selected the recurrence of the Olympic festival as a suitable opportunity for his attempt, trusting to the associations which this festival would recall, as likely to influence in his favour the Athenian public. So Alcibiades, when at a particular period in his tortuous political career he desired to produce among the Greeks a feeling of respect for Athens and a weakening of Spartan influence, saw in the Olympic games his best opportunity for effecting this result. Seven four-horse chariots entered in the name of the ambitious Athe-

* Grote's Hist. of Greece, Part II., chap. xi.

nian dazzled the astounded spectators, secured to their owner the first and the second prize, and secured to him further the triumph (for the time at least) of his policy. And at the most critical moment of Grecian history, when the Persian Xerxes was advancing into Bœotia with the innumerable hosts which were to avenge upon Athens the burning of the Lydian capital —when Leonidas and his noble company threw away their lives in vain in the defile of Thermopylæ, and the united fleets of Greece were retiring before the irresistible foe at Artemisium,—not all the perils of their common country could make the Greeks abandon their accustomed festival. "What are the Greeks doing?" asked Xerxes of some Arcadian deserters. —They were celebrating the Olympic games.

Thoroughly to explain the Greek idea of the importance of these contests would require a book to itself. It must suffice to point out various considerations which may assist us to some extent in appreciating it.

We must remember first that the methods of war in early Greece made physical strength and dexterity a really important qualification in a warrior. Of strategy or even tactics we find little trace in the early history of Greek wars. The battles of the Iliad are won by the prowess of individual champions, not by skilful organisation of forces, or choice of positions, or well-timed employment of reserves. To fight in the forefront of the battle is Homer's conception of a general's duty. And the result of an ancient Waterloo depended on the presence, on this side or on that, of the

more numerous and the more efficient prototypes of "Shaw the Life-guardsman."

Even when the old quasi-feudal military system of Greece had given place to some sort of organisation of forces, when cavalry, heavy infantry, and skirmishers were separately drilled, and employed on a definite principle, individual prowess would still tell enormously on the fortunes of the day. Two long lines of infantry, pushing against each other with pikes,—such was the main aspect of a Greek battle at its most critical moment. The cavalry rarely formed an important element in an army, the archers and slingers were considered an inferior branch of the service; it was in the line of "hoplites" that the mass of citizen-soldiers were to be found. Thus soundness of wind, suppleness of limb, strength, nerve, and weight, were to a great extent the measure of a citizen's power to aid his city in her time of need. And while the legislators of Sparta secured the prevalence of these qualities by a compulsory and universal athletic training, other states encouraged by every available means, by local contests and by rewards to native champions, the growth of athletic tastes in their citizens.

Again and again in Pindar we find athletic triumphs associated with success in war. "Oft," he says, as he praises his favourite Ægina,*—

> "Oft have the heroes she has borne
> The crown of sportive contests worn,
> Oft in rapid fight won fame."

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* Pyth. viii. 26.

And so the success at the Isthmus of the Theban Melissus is described as compensating for a terrible military reverse which had swept off four members of his family, and as opening a new era of glory for the house which had ever since lain, as it were, under a cloud.*

"'Twas theirs the gallant steed to rear
And Ares of the brazen spear
Their warlike might did bless;
But on their home in wrath the tempest leapt,
And from their hearth four hero-brethren swept:
Then from the sky once more the storm-cloud wild
Passed! and the earth again with blushing roses smiled.
Such was the will of Heaven. The earth-shaking king
Who loves Onchestus, and the ridge
That towers o'er Corinth's Ocean-bridge,
Bids us once more in triumph sing,
Tuning for their high race the echoing string.
For wrapt in slumber still and deep
Long had their glory lain asleep.
'Awake!' he cried;—at once she woke:
From all her form, as sparks of fire,
Beams of divinest beauty broke,
Bright as when Phosphor leads the starry choir!"—(S.)

And, addressing Aristagoras of Tenedos,† the poet exclaims that a descendant of the mail-clad warriors whom Orestes led from Amyclæ might well be expected to achieve a foremost place among athletes. Thus athletic prowess was regarded by the Greeks of Pindar's day not as a mere useless accomplishment, but as a real measure of a man's worth to his country.

* Isthm. iii. 14. † Nem. xi. 33.

The power of dealing good blows in the boxing-ring, or of grappling an antagonist in the "pancratium" (a sort of mauling-match in which legs and arms were employed *ad libitum*), or of distancing him in the foot-race, made a man a better soldier, and by consequence a more valuable citizen. Even in our own day have we not heard rumours of official recognition of similar qualifications in army-candidates? and was it not the Duke of Wellington who declared that "the battle of Waterloo was won in the playing-fields of Eton"?

But these considerations will not serve to explain the value set by the Greeks on successes in the chariot-race. Unless the victor drove his own chariot, which was not usually the case, no especial physical qualifications were implied by such a victory. Yet these triumphs were as much or even more esteemed than were those of the boxer, the runner, or the wrestler. How was it that the bard could be roused to enthusiasm by the successes of a champion who need not necessarily so much as witness his own victory, much less contribute to it by his exertions?

To answer this question, it is necessary to realise the associations surrounding the whole subject of horse-keeping in Greece. It was the chief outward and visible sign of wealth and aristocracy. The geographical features and the political divisions of early Greece prevented the accumulation of landed property on a large scale. Architecture and the arts of painting and sculpture were not till a later period sufficiently advanced to encourage the display of wealth by the

rearing of magnificent palaces or the collection of valuable works of art. A rich man, who wished to use his wealth like a prince and not like a miser, had a somewhat limited choice of objects on which to expend it. Such were the undertaking at his own charges of some expensive public duty (a "Liturgia," as the Greeks called it), hospitality on a large scale, and, lastly, the maintenance of a fine stud of horses. So intimate was the connection between horse-keeping and aristocracy in Greece, that we hear in one state of "Hippobotæ" or "Horse-rearers" as the recognised title of its nobles. Æschylus calls horses "the ornament of wealthy pride;" Plato couples "wealth and horse-breeding" together as synonyms; and Aristotle remarks that "wherever a state is strong in horses, the chief power will be found to reside with the nobles." Thus the chariot-race recalled associations of wealth and splendour, which dazzled the vulgar, and which, in the judgment even of educated Greeks, at a time when aristocratical sentiment was still prevalent, and a wealthy and ancient house was looked upon as a lingering survival of the Heroic Age, might well be the theme of a poet's homage. It is as the antithesis to the miserly hoarding of wealth, that its liberal expenditure on horses and chariots is admired and applauded by Pindar. Wide is the power of wealth well used,* he exclaims. Wealth decorated with triumphs, and lavished freely on noble ambitions, shines like a dazzling star.†

* Pyth. v. 1. † Ol. ii. 53.

"But if there be whose grovelling soul hath planned
With churlish scorn his store to hug and hide,
Tell him that such have lived unknown and nameless died." *—(S.)

Every city of any importance in Greece encouraged athletic prowess and lavish expenditure of wealth in its citizens by the institution of local contests, sanctified by all the ceremonies of religion, and placed usually under the patronage of a local deity. But all these minor celebrations were eclipsed by the glories of the four great games, and far above all in unapproachable supremacy towered the majestic feast of Olympia. It is impossible now to trace the steps by which these four festivals raised themselves above the mass of similar gatherings to the dignity of Panhellenic celebrations—*Panegyreis*, as they were properly called, "Universal gatherings." That this supremacy was of comparatively recent date can be shown by many arguments: we may content ourselves with one, the silence of Homer. But in Pindar's time they were generally regarded as having existed unchanged from the most remote antiquity. And around the story of their foundation masses of legend had gathered, connecting them with the greatest names and the most thrilling adventures of the Heroic Age. It mattered not that sober chroniclers, and the records of victories preserved in the great Olympian temple, proved beyond doubt that the Olympia had once been a mere local festival of the Pisatans, or that innovations of various kinds were known to have been introduced

* Isthm. i. 67.

from time to time as to the nature and arrangements of the contests. To Pindar and to the average Greek of his day, the games in which a Thero or an Alcimedon contended were the very games in which the mythical heroes of Greece had shown their prowess, the glorious contests that Heracles founded by the tomb of Pelops.* Thus to engage in them was to assist in maintaining a divinely-ordered institution; it was an act of piety towards the deified founder, as well as to the hero whose tomb they graced, and the god whose presence consecrated the locality. More than this, it was to tread in the steps of divine and heroic ancestors, and to give evidence that the lofty ambitions of a glorious progenitor lived yet in the bosoms of his true-born descendants. Accordingly, all those memories and associations of religion and of antiquity, which formed, as we have seen, the very centre and substance of the highest developments of Greek Choral poetry, were gathered as it were into a focus in the Olympic festival, and reflected their splendours upon the victorious competitors in its lists. The contests of Olympia, says the Roman Horace,† as he recalls the sentiment of Greece on this subject, raise the victors "aloft to join the gods." And this halo of glory, reflected on the victors from the heroic past, seems to Pindar not merely to merit but to demand the noblest utterances of his muse.

"Such service divine at the poet's hand the conqueror's crowned locks demand:
Lyre and flute and shapely lays
Must join Ænesidamus' son to praise

* Ol. xi. 25. † Odes, I. i. 6.

With honour meet. And Pisa bids me sing,
Whence immortal lays for mortals spring,
When, in the rites ordained of Heracles,
The Ætolian arbiter with sentence fair
Garlands with olive grey the victor's hair." *

The judge, the competitor, and the poet who celebrates his victory, each (be it noticed) is discharging a sacred duty: the rites are "ordained of Heracles;" hence the obligation to fulfil them, and hence the glory which they reflect upon the victor.

But it was not in their religious aspect alone that the great games influenced so powerfully the imagination of every cultivated Greek. He saw in them also the chief and almost the only concrete embodiment of an idea, which in the age of Pindar more than ever before was growing and gaining ground in Greece,—the sentiment of Pan-hellenic unity, the conception of an absolute and even physical distinction between Greek and Barbarian. The period of Pindar's youth and early manhood coincides precisely with the successive invasions of Greece by Persia, which more than any other event in their history taught the scattered clans of Greeks to regard themselves as a single nation. Now the right of competition in the four great games was the privilege of every Greek, and of Greeks alone. Not all the ordinances of Greek religion were withheld from foreigners. Lydians like Cræsus, Italians, Phrygians, are all described as consulting the great national oracle of the Greeks at Delphi; but not the Great King himself could enter a chariot for the prize of Olympia or Delphi.

* Ol. iii. 6.

When the Macedonian princes claimed this right, it was not until satisfactory proof of their Hellenic ancestry had been demanded and furnished that their claim was allowed. Greek princes in distant colonies, like Arcesilas of Cyrene, were careful to retain their position as members of the Hellenic family, by occasional "entries" at one or other of the four great games. Thus these contests reminded the Greeks of their nationality; and every emotion which the thought of that nationality could excite, at a moment when foreign invasion was threatening it with destruction and calling on all who valued its existence to maintain it against the common foe, was aroused by the recurrence of these festivals in the bosom of a patriotic Greek like Pindar, and finds continual expression in his poetry.

But, quite apart from their antiquarian interest, and the religious and patriotic associations which surrounded them, the great games were in their mere external aspect the most magnificent spectacles known to the Greeks. And on this account alone they might well excite the imagination of a people so keenly alive to all the influences of external pomp and splendour. If we may consider Pindar as at all a typical Greek of his own day, it is clear that magnificence for itself, and irrespective of any further associations connected with it, was to them a source of the keenest admiration and pleasure.

It is true that in Pindar's day the magnificent creations of architecture and sculpture, which at a later period were among the chief glories of Olympia, were

mostly yet to come. The colossal ivory statue of Zeus Olympius, the masterpiece of Phidias, and regarded (we are told) less as a statue than as an actual incarnation of Deity, was the work of a later generation, and the temple which was to contain it was as yet incomplete. But what earlier art could do to decorate the place with temples and statues had been done, and its natural features would have been beautiful without the aid of art. Olympia * was a rich and fertile valley bounded on one side by the broad stream of the Alpheus, one of the largest of Grecian rivers, its banks shaded with plane-trees, and its bosom studded with numerous islets. Between Mount Cronius (a conical height covered with pines) and the Alpheus lay the Altis, or sacred grove of Zeus; and, in a grove of olives, from which the victor's crown was cut, on a declivity of Mount Cronius, was the stadium or race-course. Two brooks run down from Cronius to join the Alpheus, and one of them, the Cladeus, formed a boundary of the Altis. Nearly every feature of the scene which modern travellers have noticed, is noticed also in Pindar,—the river, the olive-groves, Mount Cronius and its trees. The place was treeless once, he says, and Cronius a bare and snowy hill, till Heracles brought from the land of the Hyperboreans trees to crown the victors, and shade the concourse of spectators.† Among these groves and streams, for the five days and nights which the festival occupied, lay encamped a multitude from every tribe and colony of Greece, imposing in its mere numbers, and rendered yet more brilliant by the pres-

* Wordsworth's Greece, p. 386, &c. † Ol. iii. 18.

ence of official deputations (called Theoriæ) from the various states, vying with each other in the magnificence of their dress and equipment. The numerous * well-appointed cars, each drawn by four spirited horses, which started together for the chariot-race, must in themselves have been an exciting spectacle. And the athletes in their manly beauty and splendid muscular development provoked enthusiastic demonstrations from the spectators. A midsummer sun beat with only too fierce a radiance upon the scene by day; and at night, from a hundred banquets, songs of triumph and festivity rose into the clear sky illumined by the full orb of the harvest-moon.†

The Olympian games were celebrated at intervals of four years. During the month in which they were held a sacred armistice was proclaimed by heralds throughout Greece. Thus all its various and often discordant tribes, laying aside for a while their mutual animosities, met in peaceful intercourse to swell the gathering at Olympia. As further illustrating the importance of the games in the eyes of Greeks, it may be mentioned that their unfailing occurrence at regular intervals supplied Greek historians with their chief basis of chronological computation. Such and such an event, they would say, happened in the third year of the 80th Olympiad. The contests themselves were by no means the only sources of attraction to the

* We hear, at Pytho, of a race in which forty cars were *upset*. Such a scene imagination wellnigh refuses to picture. Pyth. v. 49.

† Ol. xi. 75; iii. 20.

general public. Merchants came to traffic, poets and even prose-authors to recite their compositions before the largest audiences that they could ever hope to address. We are told that Herodotus, "the Father of History," recited his great work to an audience of assembled Greeks at Olympia; and that the young Thucydides, who was present, was inspired by the scene with the first conception of his own yet greater work. "If," says a modern scholar, "we could suppose all the best horse-races, foot-races, prize-fights, and wrestling-matches, all the May meetings and musical festivals, to be fixed for the same place at the same time, and then conceive not merely that the Houses of Parliament should adjourn to attend, but that even in time of war a truce should be proclaimed during their celebration — imagine the assemblage of men of English blood from the furthest corners of the known world, to all of whom, and to their children, the name of the victor in the principal race would form an epoch and a date never to be forgotten, superseding that of the monarch or the president,—if, I say, we can form such a picture as this, we shall have some idea of what the festival of Olympia was to the old Hellenic world." *

The moral and social influences of the great games are dilated upon by Greek rhetoricians in terms which to a modern reader may seem exaggerated, but which, at least, serve to illustrate ancient ideas on the subject.

"The Panegyreis," says one of these authors,† "were

* W. G. Clark, Peloponnesus.

† Dionys. Halic. Techn. Rhet. c. i.

an invention and gift of the gods to give men a respite from the weightier cares of life, bestowed—as Plato says—by gods in pity for the toil-worn human race. They were drawn together by men of culture, and established by cities by public agreement on public grounds, to delight and entrance those who attended them." Their founders, adds the same author in another place, "making communities to cease from their wars and their mutual differences, drew them together as it were into a single community, the common country of all, there to meet and sacrifice and revel, forgetting all the troubles of the past."*

Precisely similar is the language of Isocrates. "The founders of the Panegyreis are justly praised for bequeathing to us such a custom. They provided that we should meet together, contracting truces and laying aside our enmities: that we should join in prayers and sacrifices, and thus recall the memory of our common descent, and for the future feel more kindly one towards another; that we should revive old friendships and form new ones; and that neither the general public nor the qualified champions should find their time wasted; but that these gatherings of the Greeks should enable the latter to display their gifts, and the former to gaze upon them as they contend; while neither should lack interest in the occasion, but each have cause for pride,—the spectators in seeing the athletes toiling on their account, the athletes in reflecting that it is themselves that all have come to see." †

* Dionys. Halic. Techn. Rhet. c. vii.

† Isocr. Paneg. 44.

The victor in an Olympic competition was mounted upon a tripod of bronze, and crowned with a wreath of olive, cut from the sacred trees with a golden sickle. Public proclamation was made of his name, his parentage, and his native state; and father and fatherland were each esteemed as sharing in the victor's glory. Great was the triumph of a newly-founded city, when for the first time its name was proclaimed by the sacred heralds in the ear of assembled Greece. We may find an instance of this feeling in an Ode of Pindar in honour of the Sicilian Psaumis and his adopted city Camarina.*

"Glory great, O Camarina, brought he to thy peopled town;
Six twin-altars duly decking at the festival most high,
Where, 'mid sacrifice of oxen, in the five days' contests vie
Car and mule and flying courser; and his triumph brought thee fame,
For thy new town's praises mingled with his father Acro's name."

When Xerxes, as has been already mentioned, began his march into Bœotia, and heard from the Arcadian spies that the Greeks were occupied at that supreme moment with the mimic contests of Olympia, he asked for what prize they strove? "A crown of olive." "Heavens!" cried a cousin of the king, "what kind of men have we come to do battle with? — men who contend not for gain, but for glory!" We have seen that substantial rewards

* Ol. v. 4.

were sometimes bestowed by Greek cities on their victorious citizens, but glory was in truth the conqueror's most sufficient and usually his only recompense. Crowned with his olive, and escorted by his rejoicing friends, who chanted usually as they went the time-honoured verses of Archilochus,—preluding, as it were, the hymns in which living poets would soon be called upon to celebrate the triumph—

"Archilochus's threefold lay,
In Olympia sounded forth, the swelling triumph-song,"*—

the victor passed by the hill of Cronus, offered his sacrifices and thanksgivings to Olympian Zeus, and returned to banquet with his friends, and listen to the joyous strains, lasting far into the night, in which the "Comus" or chorus of revellers

"Fought all his battles o'er again."

His return to his native city was a repetition of his triumph. The whole town poured out to meet him. Ælian, in one of his lively little anecdotes, describes the triumphal progress into Athens of the returned Olympian victor Dioxippus. The champion drives into the city, "as is customary with the athletes." The crowds come flocking together,—"from this side and from that, folks joined the procession and gazed upon the sight." Among the rest, braving the oriental prejudices which, as a rule, kept Greek women secluded within the precincts of the Gynæceum or Harem, comes a lady of surpassing beauty—such beauty that

* Ol. ix. 1.

the haughty hero starts, flushes, and again grows pale, turns to look, and remains transfixed, forgetful of himself, of the crowd, of everything but his charmer. The spectators exchange meaning glances, and the old cynic Diogenes of Sinope growls out a jest at the expense of "your mighty athlete," who has met his match in "a chit of a girl!" *

Further commemorations of his triumph yet awaited the returned conqueror. The tutelar deities of his city were still to be thanked for the favour to which his piety attributed some portion at least of his success. And by this time the poet, who had been commissioned to prepare a worthier record of the victory than the antiquated hymn of Archilochus, had prepared his ode and trained his chorus. Again, then, the victor and his friends visited in proud procession the altars of his religion, and again his exploits were chanted in notes of solemn joy. Nor was this the end. At family festivals, for years to come, the tale of triumph was told again. And if, in course of time, the victor rose to positions of dignity and power in his native state, the hymns which accompanied his installation dwelt once more on his athletic successes. Many of Pindar's Odes were composed and performed long after the victories they celebrate. And his poem † for the installation of Aristagoras as chief magistrate of Tenedos owes its preservation to the numerous records which it contains of his victories in youthful competitions, and which led the grammarians of Alexandria to class it, wrongly yet fortunately, among the Nemean Odes.

* Var. Hist. xii. 58. † Nem. xi.

The special features in which the other great games differed from those of Olympia need not detain us long. The Pythian contests were held in the plains of Crissa, under the shadow of the towering crag of Delphi, the centre or "navel" of earth, as Greek poets described it. Here was the world-renowned temple and oracle of Apollo, the especial god of the Dorian race, and the patron of music and the arts. This fact may serve to explain the chief peculiarity of the Pythian games, the musical and poetical contests, which here accompanied the equestrian and gymnastic competitions. A single Ode of Pindar's recalls this feature in the games of Pytho,—that in which he commemorates the victory of the Agrigentine Midas, victor in the competition of flute-players. Its brevity renders it suitable for quotation, and it introduces the remarkable legend of the invention of the flute, suggested to Athene (as tradition told) by the dying shrieks of the Gorgon! For the credit of Greek music, we must hope that the inventress improved upon her model, or that Midas's performance had not too slavishly reproduced it

PYTHIAN XII.

TO MIDAS OF ACRAGAS, WINNER OF THE PRIZE FOR FLUTE-PLAYING.

Strophe.

"I pray thee, Queen of splendour, city of peerless grace,
Persephone's home; O thou, that on thy tower-clad hill

Dwellest, fair Queen, beside the streams of pastoral
Acragas!
Propitious greet, with favour of Heaven and man's good-
will,
The crown, at Pytho's festival that glorious Midas won;
And welcome him, victorious in that fair art,—of old
That Pallas found, when wailed the Gorgons bold,
And she to music wove their dismal moan.

Antistrophe.

For maiden-shrieks and hiss of horrible snakes she
heard,
Forth flowing in plaintive strain with weary anguish
fraught;
What time as Perseus did to death that sister-triad's
third,
And ruin to the hosts of Seriphos' island brought;
And blindness therewithal he poured on Phorcus' im-
mortal race;
And Polydectes rued the gift, the son of Danae gave
To him, perforce that made her wife and slave;
When headless lay Medusa fair of face,

Strophe.

Slain by the hero, sprung, they say, from a golden rain!
But, when from his peril she had saved her champion dear,
Maiden Athene fashioned then the flute with its varied
strain,
To echo back the wailing that smote upon her ear,
As clamorously forth from fell Euryale's maw it came.
So found the goddess,—and forthwith on mortal man
bestowed,
And named the strain her 'many-headed mode;'
Memorial fair of each frequented game!

Antistrophe.

Through slender brass it flows; through many a reeden quill,
That grew by the Graces' town for choral dance renowned,
In nymph Cephisis' hallowed haunts; true witness of dancers' skill!
Ne'er, save by toiling, mortal aught of bliss hath found;
But all that lacks, in one brief day, can Destiny's power supply.
What fate ordains may none avoid: needs must a day befall
Of chances unforeseen, that, maugre all
Man's scheming, part will grant and part deny!"

The poem has no Epodes, showing that it was intended to be sung by a procession without the usual halts. The prize of the Pythia was a crown of laurel, the especial emblem of Apollo, recalling the legend so beautifully told by Wordsworth:—

"'Tis sung in ancient minstrelsy,
That Phœbus wont to wear
The leaves of any pleasant tree
Around his golden hair;
Till Daphne, desperate with pursuit
Of his imperious love,
At her own prayer transformed took root,
A laurel in the grove.

Then did the Penitent adorn
His brow with laurel green;
And 'mid his bright locks, never shorn,
No meaner leaf was seen;

And poets sage, through every age,
About their temples wound
The bay; and conquerors thanked the gods,
With laurel chaplets crowned."

The Nemean festival was held every other year in a glen or plateau surrounded by the mountains of Argolis—"bleak, grey, barren hills, worn by the winter torrents into a thousand furrows"*—a very different scene from the groves and tufted hills of Olympia. Rivulets without number course down the hills, and fall into the river Nemea. The most prominent feature in the landscape must always have been the singular "table-mountain" now known as Mount Phouka, a huge pyramidal mass, truncated, yet still overtopping all the surrounding heights. Of this mountain, however, Pindar tells us nothing. The legends of Nemea seem to impress him more than its scenery, though he notices the glen bosomed deep in hills, and its wealth of streams and water-courses. Amid the heath and grasses of this glen had ranged, in the old heroic days, the fearful lion of Nemea, slain at last by Heracles, and furnishing him with the lion-skin which was his traditional costume. The "glen," or the "brake of the lion," is Pindar's favourite periphrasis for Nemea. Its sports were frequented, it would seem, especially by athletes from the neighbouring island of Ægina. A voyage of from one to two hours in fair weather would bring them to the port of Epidaurus, and thence by a steep ascent they climbed to the scene of the contests. Six out of the eight

* Clark's Peloponnesus, p. 65.

Odes which Pindar devotes to victories at Nemea, describe the successes of Æginetan champions. There are eleven so-called Nemean Odes, but two refer to victories gained in other contests, and one (as we have seen) is an Installation-ode, improperly classed among the Epinicia. Neither olive nor laurel graced the stadium of Nemea. There was, indeed, a grove of sacred cypresses round the temple of Nemean Zeus, three of whose singularly lofty Doric columns still remain as a puzzle to archæologists. But the victor's crown was not gathered from these ill-omened trees. It was supplied by the wild parsley, which still abounds in the locality.

The last of the four great games were the Isthmia, celebrated in alternate years with the Nemea, on the "sea-severing ridge"* of the Corinthian Isthmus, and appropriately dedicated to the sea-god Poseidon. The site of his temple is believed to be still marked by some very ancient Doric and Ionic ruined columns, "akin," as a modern traveller tells us, "rather to old Sicilian than to Attic or Æginetan architecture." The wreath was of pine, according to most authorities; yet here, too, as at Nemea, the victors in the chariot-race seem to have been sometimes at least crowned with parsley.† To this crown, whether of pine or parsley, St Paul refers, as is well known, when he reminds the Corinthians of the exertions of athletes in those Isthmian contests, at which some of his hearers may have themselves competed, and which all must have often witnessed. "Now they do it to

* Isthm. i. 9. † ib. ii. 16.

obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." May not some recollection of these, his own words, have lived still in his mind when he wrote from Rome to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight;" or more literally, "I have striven in the glorious contest, I have finished the race; . . . henceforth there is laid up for me the wreath of righteousness, which the Lord, the just judge, will award me in that day"?

CHAPTER V.

CLASSIFICATION OF PINDAR'S ODES.—HIS TREATMENT OF THE MYTHS.

THE traditional arrangement of Pindar's poems is ascribed to the famous Alexandrian grammarian Aristophanes—not, of course, to be confounded with his namesake, the more famous Athenian playwright—who flourished in the third century B.C. By this critic the whole of the poet's writings were divided into a series of Books,—Dithyrambs in one, Dirges in another, and so forth, the list being headed by the four Books of Epinicia or Triumph-Odes commemorating respectively victories at Olympia, Pytho, Nemea, and the Isthmus. A complete modern edition of Pindar's extant poetry would contain the first three Books of Aristophanes's collection entire; but the conclusion of his fourth Book, "The Isthmia," has been lost, and the remaining books are only represented by fragments accidentally preserved to us by quotations. Whenever an ancient author quotes from an Olympian, a Pythian, or a Nemean Ode, the passage which he cites will be found in our editions of Pindar, but there are several ancient quotations of Isthmian Odes which

are not included in the extant seven. Thus it will be seen that the manuscripts on which our editions are founded contained the first three Books, and a portion of the fourth, of Aristophanes's collection.

The several Odes of these four Books were arranged by Aristophanes according to their *occasions*, not chronologically—for Pindar's earliest extant Ode is the Tenth Pythian, his next the Sixth Pythian, and his latest the Fifth Olympian,—but so that (as a rule) poems commemorating chariot-victories should begin a Book, these being followed by Odes for feats of strength, as boxing and wrestling; and lastly, by those recording the victories of speed in the "stadium" and "diaulus" or "long-race" (literally "double-course"). As a rule, also, the successes of grown men, in any species of competition, precede those of boys in the corresponding juvenile matches. The classification also involved sundry other minute considerations as to the relative dignity of different competitions into which we need not enter, the more so as Aristophanes does not seem to have always carried out his own principles with absolute precision. The First Olympian Ode, "For Hiero of Syracuse, victor in the Horse-race," owes its precedence to the legends contained in it, the adventures of Pelops, from whom the Morea (as we call it) was supposed to have derived its classical name—"The Isle of Pelops," the "Peloponnesus;" and whose race on the plains of Elis to win his bride Hippodameia was regarded as a prototype of the Olympian contests of a later day.

But the received classification has many disad-

vantages. The titles of the four Books give a very inadequate idea of their contents. As we have seen, the actual *occasion* of an Ode is one thing, its real theme is frequently another. A modern reader, again, will care little for the distinctions, which to a Greek seemed so important, of chariot-race, mile-race, wrestling-match, and the like, and will wish for some classification less dependent on what he will regard as insignificant accidents of the particular Odes. Something might be said for chronology as the basis of such a classification. There would be a certain interest in attempting to trace the development and decline of Pindar's genius through the fifty years which separate his earliest from his latest Ode. Yet the results of such an attempt would probably be inconsiderable. We may, indeed, distinguish certain variations of *force* in Pindar's poetry at the various stages of its development, but there is no marked change in its general *character* from time to time; none in its choice of themes; scarcely any in its method of handling them. His general conception of the proper form of an Ode seems to have been fixed during the period of his early education, his "Lehr-jähre" under Scopelinus and Lasus, and no subsequent influences can be shown to have substantially modified it. Thus a classification of his Odes based on chronology would be unsatisfactory, from the absence of sufficiently marked epochs.*

* This, however, is the method adopted by Leop. Schmidt in his elaborate work, Pindar's Leben und Dichtung (Bonn, 1862).

More perhaps may be gained by grouping the Odes, not according to their nominal occasions, but according to their actual contents: the legendary matter, which, as has been already explained, should be considered as the true fount and source of Pindaric poetry. Adopting this as our general principle, we shall be enabled at the same time to classify the Odes according to the nationality of the respective conquerors whom they commemorate; for, as we have seen, much of a choric poet's skill depended on a happy selection from the boundless stores of mythology of those legends which were best calculated to gratify the family or national pride of a patron. Thus we shall find the Odes in honour of Æginetan victors dealing almost exclusively with the legends of the Æacidæ, the old heroic house which once ruled in Ægina. Similarly, to Rhodian and Cyrenaic athletes Pindar sings chiefly of the mythical origin of their respective states. The victory of a Theban, again, suggests to the poet a flood of local legends, Heracles and Iolaus, the wars of the "Seven against Thebes," and their descendants the "Epigoni." Such a classification, then, will enable us at once to reduce the tangled mass of Pindaric poetry into intelligible divisions, and to follow in some measure the workings of the poet's mind, as he endeavours to connect the nominal occasion of each Ode with that mythological world from which in each case he draws his loftiest inspirations.

Nearly, but not quite always, modern scholars are able to detect with certainty the connection between the occasion of a Pindaric Ode and the myths which are

employed to adorn it. It is conceivable that a fuller knowledge than is now possible of the antiquities of Greece, the genealogies of the great families in various cities, and the legends attaching to them, would enable us to prove in every case the assertion of A. Boeckh, the prince of Pindaric scholars, that Pindar *never* introduces a myth without the direct intention of complimenting his patron. And as we have seen, it is nearly always through his family, or his nation, that the patron is complimented. Yet there are cases in which a legend, connected though it be especially with the conqueror's family history or with that of his state, is yet clearly introduced with other more obvious objects than the gratification of family or national pride. At times we find mythology employed to point a moral lesson, or to illustrate vicissitudes in the career of a victor, to soften the memory of old defeats, to encourage him to fresh exertions, and generally to exhibit in an attractive form those various precepts, warnings, and maxims, which the poet—in his capacity of philosopher and moralist—pours from time to time into the ears of his audience. Sometimes, again, it is the *locale* of a contest, rather than the family or country of the victor, with which the mythical matter of an Ode seems most obviously connected. No doubt it may be said that here, too, if we only knew how, a connection might be shown between the victor's personal surroundings and the myth. But, inasmuch as this phenomenon appears mainly in Odes addressed to conquerors of comparatively undistinguished origin—or at least whose family

distinctions were of comparatively recent date — it seems more probable that, in these cases, the poet purposely avoided the futile flattery of dwelling on imaginary heroic glories of a *parvenu* house or state, and deliberately fixed the attention of his audience on its real though recent achievements, summoning for the adornment of these achievements all the old heroic associations of the locality in which the triumphs had been won. And this is probably the reason why the local legends of Olympia figure so much more prominently in Pindar's poetry than those of Pytho, Nemea, or the Isthmus. For a large proportion of the Olympian Odes are dedicated to members of Sicilian royal houses, whose position had been won merely by force of arms at a comparatively recent date, and whose family traditions, whatever they may have been, were totally insignificant when compared with their subsequently acquired greatness. Whereas the successes of Æginetans (let us say) at Nemea and the Isthmus, or of the ancient Cyrenaic princely houses at Pytho, glorious as in themselves they were esteemed to be, formed simply an episode in the splendid annals of Ægina and Cyrenè. So that it was to these latter, and not to the associations of the contests themselves, that the poet directed the attention of his audience.

Speaking generally, it may be said that Pindar's introductions of mythology serve four most obvious purposes: (1) The glorification of a victor's nation or family; (2) The illustration of special points in his personal surroundings, or career, or character; (3) The direction of special attention to the glories of a victory,

by dwelling on the divine institution of a contest, the dignity of the gods who preside over it, and the various traditional associations which consecrate its scene; (4) The supporting, by arguments drawn from a divine antiquity, of *theses*, moral, political, and philosophical, which the poet desired from time to time to propound and justify. Sometimes, by a happy selection of his instances, the poet is able to serve several, or even all, of these purposes at once. But any one of them seems a sufficient reason for the introduction of a myth. And where such a sufficient reason can be shown, it seems hypercritical, if not unreasonable, to insist too strongly on trifling indications of a possibility that the poet may have had other motives in introducing it.

The transitions by which Pindar passes from his nominal to his real themes, from the commemoration of a victory to the world of legend in which he best loves to dwell, are among the most extraordinary features of his poetry. No *à priori* considerations of the manner in which such transitions might be expected to be made will give the most remote conception of the manner in which they actually are made. Instantly, unexpectedly, at a leap, he plunges from the present to the past, and from the past to the present—from fact to fiction, and from fiction back again to fact. The apparently casual mention of a place or a person is followed by a long mythological episode, to all appearance a mere digression, but which on reflection is found to be adapted with surprising skill to the main purposes of the Ode. But this is not all. The legend introduced so strangely is often as strangely

abandoned. It has served the immediate purpose for which it was introduced, and the poet springs at once to another theme. Often, too, a poem contains not one myth, but many, and these are interwoven with one another and with the other materials of the Ode in the most singular, and at first sight unintelligible, fashion. One legend passes into another, like the stories of the 'Arabian Nights;' the scene shifts from Troy to Salamis, and from Salamis to Thessaly; and from the adventures of the successive inhabitants of Rhodes, we are flung centuries back into an age when not as yet—

"Towered the Rhodian isle conspicuous over Ocean's waves, but still
Deep it lay beneath the whelming brine."*

Or the "tale of Troy" has been referred to,† and we are expecting to hear some well-known feat of Achilles or Ajax; but no! it is "the form of Lycian Glaucus" who appears before the Greeks, and "tells them all with pride" of his Corinthian ancestry; and so follows legend after legend of the Corinthian hero Bellerophon, apparently introduced "without rhyme or reason," but really the very legends which Pindar had all along been preparing to introduce, in honour of the Corinthian athlete whose victory he is at the moment celebrating.

Sometimes the only visible link between a myth and the context to which it is attached is so transparently inadequate to bear the weight laid upon it, as almost to suggest the idea that the poet is purposely playing with his subject. Thus in the First Isthmian,

* Ol. vii. 56. † ib. xiii.

addressed to Herodotus of Thebes, the poet introduces an allusion to the technical name of sundry musical rhythms which he is employing, and plunges off on this excuse into the legends of Castor and Iolaus, the mythical heroes from whom the names of these measures were derived. But let it not be supposed that the introduction of these heroes, and the description of their friendly rivalry in feats of arms—Castor in Sparta on the banks of Eurotas, and Iolaus by the waters of his native Theban Dirce—is really due to so absurd a cause. Pindar's true object is at once to honour his countryman, Herodotus, by suggesting a comparison between him and the local hero Iolaus, and to shadow forth, in the legendary brotherhood-in-arms of Iolaus and the Spartan hero Castor, a close alliance now in process of formation between Thebes and Sparta, from which great things were expected, and of which Herodotus may not improbably have been a prominent adviser.

Again, in the Ninth Pythian, the poet affects to check himself in a too exuberant flow of myth and compliment, with a quotation of the somewhat hackneyed maxim, that "measure in all things is best." And thereupon he begins a story of Iolaus, apparently with no further justification than his opening remark, that "Iolaus knew the importance of measure." But, in truth, he wished to dwell upon the ties connecting Cyrene (the victor's native state) with Thebes (the home of Iolaus); and it is this, and not the shaky bridge by which he pretends to cross to his new topic, that really leads him to the legend of Iolaus.

In the Tenth Pythian, Pindar has been saying that a man who is at once a conqueror and the father of a conqueror has attained the summit of human happiness. What matters it, he cries, that there are further heights which he can never scale; that he cannot climb the brazen heaven, or reach the Paradise beyond the pole, the happy country of the Hyperboreans? And then he tells the legend of the hero Perseus, who had found the wondrous way to that mysterious region. No digression could seem more uncalled for; yet Boeckh suggests reasons for believing that the legends of Perseus had a special interest for the family of the Thessalian noble at whose request the poem was written. The pretended link again is a deception. The real occasion for the introduction of the myth is the family history of the patron.

Yet again, in the Eleventh Pythian, Pindar has occasion to tell the famous tale of Agamemnon's murder by his wife, probably, as Boeckh argues at length, in connection with a misfortune which had befallen the victor's family. But how does he introduce it? Does he condole plainly with his patron, and pass by obvious steps to compare the present disaster with its legendary parallel? Far from it. Pindar disdains to tread such "beaten paths."

> "Learnt have I shorter paths, and others have in them led." *

His patron had conquered at Pytho—Pytho had once been ruled by Pylades—Pylades was the bosom

* Pyth. iv. 248.

friend of Orestes—Orestes was the son and avenger of Agamemnon. So at last his theme is reached. And thus, to quote Pindar's own description of his poetry—

"From theme to theme, the bright applausive lay,
As bees from flower to flower, speeds on its changeful way." *

This singular habit of Pindar's is a constant source of bewilderment to his modern readers, and, more than any other feature in his poetry, justifies the charge of obscurity which is so frequently brought against him. No poet can tell a story more plainly and pointedly than he, when it suits him to be plain and pointed. No poet could exhibit more skill in selecting from a mass of legendary memories the precise story which best suits his purpose on each occasion. But he chooses deliberately to approach his myths in this unexpected style. It is in his eyes a merit—an exhibition of skill. Often he professes to apologise for his digressions, as he chooses to call these carefully-planned episodes, which are the real centres—the very groundwork of his Odes. He speaks of himself as driven unexpectedly upon his themes by such winds as toss the skiffs at sea. He calls to his Muse to stay the oar, and cast the anchor from the prow, ere he strike upon some lurking rock. But such language is merely intended to heighten the illusion which he has designedly produced, to give his carefully-elaborated poem the air of an improvisation. Few poets

* Pyth. x. 53.

have more consistently applied the maxim, "*Ars est celare artem.*"

Connected with this peculiarity of Pindar's is another, the practice of continually alluding to myths without working out their incidents. Thus he delays the development of his main legend to touch by the way on a dozen others; or he begins a story, and then drops it with some allusion to the necessary limits of his Ode, or even with no excuse at all. Sometimes, before commencing his real theme, he affects to hesitate in his choice of a subject—he speaks like the victim of an *embarras de richesse*. "There is *this* story before me, and *that*, and *that*—which am I to choose?"

> "Whither then down the torrent's flow
> Our swift stone speed we?" *

Modern readers, who find in these passages only obscure allusions to tales of which they know little, may well complain of them as needless additions to the already sufficient difficulties of Pindar's poetry. They will naturally consider that a story which is worth mentioning is worth telling, and be repelled by the seemingly exorbitant demands which Pindar makes on the mythological knowledge of his readers. But we must remember the audiences whom the poet in the first instance addressed. The ancient legends of their houses were to them no mystery to be unravelled by commentators. Every slight allusion of the Ode recalled to them some glorious tradition, some hero of

* Ol. xi. 9.

whom they had long been proud, and whose achievements it would be needless for the poet to narrate. And this very knowledge of his audience is made by Pindar a ground for complimenting them. He has an endless store of such glorious allusions, he tells them, —the wise grasp their sense at once, but to the uninitiated they remain a blank perplexity.

"Oh mine are keen shafts many a one
Within the quiver stored:
Of meaning to the wise, but to the horde
Dark riddles!" *

To some extent Pindar has paid the penalty for his imperious scorn of the uninitiated "horde," and has sacrificed, for the applauses of his immediate audience, the chance of a wider popularity.

Sometimes, in passing from the occasion of an Ode to his favourite legends, Pindar seems to scorn the employment of any bridge whatever. Of this a good instance will be found in the First Nemean, addressed to Chromius of Ætna. Chromius, he says,† is at once strong and wise, and on such a patron he would fain lavish all the best stores of his poetry. He is no miser to hoard its treasures for himself; no! let him pour them on Chromius, and win his gratitude in return.

"But, when I fain would wake
Some old heroic lay,
Whose but Herakles' noble name
Should deck the exulting verse for thy dear sake?"—(S).

* Ol. ii. 83. † Nem. i. 30.

And the name of the famous hero having been thus introduced, the whole legend of his early life follows, from his adventure with the snakes in his cradle, to his final apotheosis, and marriage with Hebe. Now, when we examine the link by which this story is introduced, stripping away its poetical surroundings, it is simply this: "Chromius deserves a noble legend; I will tell him, therefore, the legend of Heracles." But why should Heracles especially be fixed upon? The pretended bridge breaks down at once, or rather it is no bridge at all, and we have to seek the occasion for the myth in the connection between the exploits of Heracles and Nemea, the scene of Chromius's victory.

An interesting question which presents itself in connection with Pindar's employment of myths is this: How far did he permit himself to innovate upon received traditions? Was his treatment of them orthodox, according to the ideas of his age, or was he a religious reformer? Philosophy, in his day, had already begun a more or less successful revolt against large bodies of popular mythology. Xenophanes, older than Pindar by at least a generation, had ventured to attack the almost sacred books of Homer and Hesiod on the ground of immorality. "Homer and Hesiod," he had said in some still extant verses, "ascribed to the gods all qualities which among men are grounds for shame and reproach,—theft, adultery, and reciprocal fraud." Protagoras, almost coeval with Pindar, questioned the very existence of gods. And before our poet's death, Euripides had already begun to bring out at Athens

dramas in which the old mythology was varied with the utmost freedom for poetical purposes, and occasionally criticised from a point of view scarcely distinguishable from that of the most pronounced sceptic. Against this innovating movement Greek conservatism protested loudly. Poets of the ancient school denounced the speculation which had produced such results—"the yelping cur that barked against its master." Did Pindar share the new ideas, or did he protest against them? Or did he, like Aristophanes in a later age, while protesting against them, exhibit in his own writings signs of their influence?

It might seem, at first sight, as if this last were the true answer to our question. For while in Pindar's earliest Ode we find him assuming an attitude of unquestioning belief towards the myths—

> "Mine be it, ne'er at feats that heavenly Powers achieve
> To marvel, but believe!" *

—in his later compositions he more than once expresses disapproval of some myth on which he has touched, and either remodels it openly, according to his sense of right, or hastens to quit the unwelcome subject. So, in the First Olympian, he is shocked at an incident in the myth of Pelops,—the story that he was boiled and eaten by the gods. "I will not repeat such a scandal," he cries—"I dare not! Tax the blessed gods with gluttony? oh, horrible!" And then, attributing the horrid tale to some "envious gossip's dark hints," he goes on to give a new version

* Pyth. x. 49.

of the occurrence, for which he accepts the full responsibility.

"Newly thus, O son of Tantalus, I'll shape thy tale," &c.*

And in the Ninth Ode of the same Book, following an ancient myth, he finds himself describing a war between Heracles and certain other great gods—Poseidon, Apollo, and Hades. At once he starts back in horror:†—

"Nay, quit such theme of song,
Tongue mine! The craft that dares with impious taunts
Assail the gods, I loathe: and misplaced vaunts
Are songs for a madman's string!
Prate not thus: but from the gods sweep far the tale of fight!"

And therewith he passes instantly to a less dangerous subject, the legend of Deucalion's deluge.

But, if we regard Pindar's poetry as a whole, we shall scarcely be inclined to accept the view of the German critic, Dronke, who, on the strength of these occasional indications, describes the poet as deliberately deserting the old paths, and paving the way for a more spiritual religion by rejecting the authority of the myths. Pindar's criticisms are directed solely against details: anything like a systematic crusade against the old beliefs as a whole, had it occurred to him as practicable, would certainly have been condemned by him as an impiety. His occasional polemics against particular forms of an ancient legend are not enough to stamp him as a sceptic. Some degree

* Ol. i. 36. † ib. ix. 36.

of licence in the handling of mythology had always been allowed to poets, even in the days when the faith of Greeks in their traditions was most childlike and unquestioning. Homer and Hesiod do not always agree in their accounts of the same transaction. When Pindar refuses * to tell the story of Bellerophon's sad fate—his final fall from the winged steed Pegasus—he does not attempt to enlist his Corinthian hearers on the side of scepticism by an outspoken condemnation of the legend which bore so hard upon their favourite local hero. He simply leaves it untold, and passes to a more pleasing topic—the reception of the winged steed in the stalls of Zeus. But, when he tells the same legend to a Theban audience,† in whom the fate of the Corinthian hero would excite no special feeling of regret or wounded pride, he no longer shrinks from describing and justifying the catastrophe.

"So the winged steed the audacious horseman threw,
Who hoped the brazen halls of Zeus to view,
Impious Bellerophon! a bitter end,
When man unholy joys hath seized,
Be sure, offended Heaven will send."—(S.)

A poet with Pindar's lofty views as to the nature of divine beings, and his genuine enthusiasm for morality as he conceived it, could not but be struck from time to time with the inconsistencies and ethical shortcomings of his legendary materials, the unseemly acts and attributes ascribed to heroes and even to gods. Yet it is but seldom that he breaks out into open revolt. He omits, he deplores, he palliates, he justifies, he moralises, but

* Ol. xiii. 91. † Isthm. vi. 44.

he scarcely ever discards. As he relates the myth of Apollo and Cyrenè, it strikes him as absurd to suppose that the god who sees and knows all things should have to apply for information and advice to the Centaur Chiron :—

"Hast *thou* yon maiden's race inquired,
O King? that knowest the final destinies
And paths of each created thing.
What leaves from earth outburst in days of spring,
What sands are tost in sea or rill,
By waves or eddying winds, and what must needs befall,
And whence,—thou knowest all!" *

And yet to ascribe hypocrisy to Apollo, the god of Truth, would be as impious as to accuse him of ignorance. And so—unwilling to deny the legend of the god's appeal to Chiron, yet feeling himself compelled either to deny or to justify it—he represents the question as asked in jest :—

"Sure—for from thee all falsehood flies—
Some sportive mood thy speech inspires!"

In the same spirit of an apologist, rather than an opponent of tradition, he moralises over the disobedience of the early Rhodian settlers. Apollo bade them kindle a hallowed fire in their city's temple; they disobeyed the order, and yet the favour of Heaven attended them,—

"Yet rained Zeus upon their people plenteous showers of gleaming gold."†

* Pyth. ix. 42. † Ol. vii. 50.

This oversight of the original myth Pindar is at pains to excuse and explain. The disobedience was due to forgetfulness, a frailty which at times besets the best of men, and for which a just Heaven knows how to make allowance. Thus the apparent sanction given by the myth to disobedience is removed, and the myth itself justified and retained.

Lastly, in describing the fate of the hero Asclepius, (more familiar, perhaps, to English readers as the Æsculapius of Roman mythology), who was struck by the lightnings of Zeus as the penalty for restoring a dead man to life, Pindar never thinks of attacking this myth, as a sceptical enthusiast might well have done, for the unworthy view which it presents of the father of gods and men, as a jealous and vindictive tyrant, grudging men an unexpected blessing, and revenging himself upon their benefactor. He prefers to attack the cupidity of Asclepius, and the vain attempt of man to transcend the laws of his being. Yet cupidity in a deified hero is a defect which needs palliation from the apologist for the myths; and so he dwells on the power of gold, against which not Wisdom's self is proof. Thus the fate of Asclepius was just, and yet his fault was not such as to invalidate his title to the honours of a hero.

Pindar, then, though attacking individual myths, must be pronounced guiltless of any intention to subvert the popular mythology. His general position is well exhibited in the special instance of his attitude towards the writings of Homer. It is an attitude, on the whole, of belief and even of reverence. He

admires Homer, he accepts his legends, he often embodies them in his work, he quotes his sentiments, and appeals to them as a modern divine would appeal to the words of Scripture. And yet he does not shrink from an occasional rejection of the authority of his oracle. He is willing to believe that Homer gave Ulysses more and Ajax less than his due. But while he exposes this unfairness, he pays a tribute to Homer's powers, designed, as it were, to rob his criticisms of their sting.

"Far greater than his meeds, I ween,
Ulysses' praise hath been,
In Homer's sweet immortal verse enshrined.
For in that verse that soars on wings doth dwell
A wondrous art of secret spell,
Throwing a haze of seeming sooth
On fair untruth;
While by the spell bewitched and blind
Is the rapt hearer's ear and mazed mind,
The hidden truth to find." *—(S.)

This attitude of Pindar towards the traditions of Greek religion—an attitude of occasional criticism, but hardly ever of actual revolt—finds a close parallel in that of his great contemporary, the Athenian Æschylus. The latter, also, though in his general tone a conservative of the conservatives, deeply and sincerely attached to the national religion, can yet at times use language which would have seemed at first sight more natural in the mouth of an Euripides. He rejects the ancient "grandsire tales" that human prosperity, as such, is the

* Nem. vii. 20.

object of divine jealousy, and declares that, sundering himself from the rest, he is single in *his* creed *—it is crime and not prosperity that provokes the wrath of Heaven. Yet he nowhere assumes a position of consistent scepticism. He does not shrink from following the old legend of Prometheus's sufferings, even when it exhibits in the darkest colours the paltry malevolence of Zeus. And yet he elsewhere speaks of Zeus with the profoundest reverence and the most unflinching loyalty. "Zeus, great Zeus, the stranger's god, I reverence!" † "No other power I know to compare with him." ‡

> "He who swells to Zeus the triumph-strain
> All of wisdom shall obtain." §

In short, such quasi-scepticism as is exhibited from time to time by Pindar and Æschylus has in it little or nothing of the sceptical spirit. It is the occasional protest of a religious and earnest nature against the inadequacies of its creed, but it does not go the length of consistently reforming that creed, much less of uncompromisingly rejecting it.

* Æsch. Agam. 730. † ib. 351.
‡ ib. 158. § ib. 167 (Conington's translation).

CHAPTER VI.

SICILY.—THE LEGENDS OF OLYMPIA.

It has already been stated that the received classification of Pindar's Odes into the four groups of Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian, gives us little clue to the contents of any particular Ode. Yet the Nemean group, if we exclude from it those Odes which have been wrongly reckoned by grammarians as Nemean—the Ninth, the Tenth, and the Eleventh—exhibits a certain unity of subject. For out of the eight remaining Odes six are devoted to victories of Æginetan athletes, and are mainly occupied with legends of the Æginetan hero Æacus and his family; while a seventh, though written for a Sicilian, dwells chiefly on the tale of Heracles, the friend and comrade of Æacus. In the Isthmian group also, two closely connected sets of legends predominate, the legends of Thebes and Ægina,—sister-states, according to Greek tradition, deriving their origin respectively from Thebe and Ægina, the daughters of Asopus. Seven Isthmian Odes are all that now remain from the original collection of Aristophanes. Three are addressed to Thebans, three to Æginetans, one to a Sicilian (and

in this last the mythical element is insignificant). No such unity can be said to characterise the Olympian or the Pythian group. In each of these, however, a particular series of legends stands prominently forward in neither case, indeed, occupying the whole or nearly the whole of the book, but in each case extending through several Odes of exceptional beauty and importance, and so forming a marked and salient feature. In the Olympian Odes, this prominence belongs to the local legends of Olympia; in the Pythian, to those of the distant colony Cyrenè, and its ruling family the Battiadæ. The legends of Olympia take up three out of the fourteen Olympian Odes, and each of these three is addressed to a victor from the western colonies of Greece in Italy and Sicily. We have already suggested a reason for this circumstance. The great houses of Sicily were greater in the present than in the past, and the poet may probably have felt that, in dwelling upon their magnificent present position and calling attention to the glorious associations of their Olympian victories, he was paying them a more welcome as well as a more sincere compliment, than he could have done by referring to family or national antecedents, which had been eclipsed by more recent glories. Still we must not suppose that all allusion to ancestral legends is excluded from the Odes addressed to Sicilians. The Second Olympian Ode, addressed to Thero of Acragas, or Agrigentum, traces the victor's family back to the great mythical house of the Theban Labdacidæ, and illustrates the vicissitudes of its history by parallels

drawn from the varied fortunes of its heroic ancestors. But this is the exception. As a rule, in all the Odes addressed to Sicilian or Italian Greeks, the mythical element is introduced either in connection with the locality or other circumstances of the triumph (Ol. i. iii. iv. xi.; Pyth. xii., and perhaps Nem. i.), or with the personal surroundings or character of the victor (Pyth. i. ii. iii. vi.; Nem. ix.), or is practically absent altogether (Ol. v. x. xii., all very short Odes; Isthm. ii.) The only exceptions are the Ode to Thero already mentioned (Ol. ii.), and the Ode (Ol. vi.) to Agesias of Syracuse, a member of a sacerdotal house, whose peculiar privileges recalled, almost of course, the legend of their supposed ancestor Iamus, and thus enabled Pindar to grace his poem with one of the most exquisite tales in Greek mythology.

Pindar's chief Sicilian patrons belonged to the royal families of Syracuse and Acragas. The regal honours of these families had not been long achieved. About the time of Pindar's boyish studies in Athens, a certain Cleander, despot of Gela in Sicily, had in his army two captains of some distinction, Gelo and Æenesidamus. Cleander was succeeded by a brother, who fell in battle; and Gelo, after some pretence of establishing the late king's sons in their father's place, ultimately succeeded in securing it for himself. Gelo was one of four brothers, the "sons of Deinomenes," and when in B.C. 485 he transferred the seat of his empire from Gela to Syracuse, his brother Hiero succeeded him at Gela. Five years later (B.C. 480) a magnificent victory over the Carthaginians at Himera, coinciding

in date with the yet more momentous success of the Greeks over the Persians at Salamis, raised the house of Deinomenes to a height of power at home and consideration abroad that had been attained by no previous Sicilian dynasty. The honours and results of this victory were shared by Thero (a son of Gelo's old comrade Ænesidamus), whom we now find established—how, we know not—as despot of Agrigentum. In two years more Gelo was dead, and Hiero succeeded to the whole of his dominions.

Thero and Hiero, representatives of the two old comrades Gelo and Ænesidamus, reigned pretty peaceably side by side, in Agrigentum and Syracuse respectively, till the death of Thero. At one time a conflict between them seemed imminent, but the danger was averted, and the credit of effecting a reconciliation is ascribed,* but on insufficient authority, to Pindar's rival-poet, Simonides. The son and successor, however, of Thero was overthrown by Hiero, who thus became to all intents and purposes supreme in Sicily. Syracuse remained his capital, but he founded also a city called Ætna, from its vicinity to the mountain of that name, and set up in it, as rulers, his son Deinomenes and his friend Chromius, either in conjunction or in succession. Further, on winning a chariot-victory at Pytho, he complimented his new city by associating its name, and not that of Syracuse, with his own, in the customary proclamation of the victor's father and native state.

After the fall of the Theronian dynasty in Agri-

* Scholiast on Pindar, Ol. ii. 29.

gentum, two members at least of the deposed family seem to have remained as private persons in that city. These were Xenocrates* (a brother of Thero) and his son Thrasybulus. Hiero had married a daughter of Xenocrates, and this may, perhaps, explain the circumstance that they were willing to remain at home in their altered position, and that Hiero permitted them to do so.

Hiero died in B.C. 467, the fifty-fifth year of Pindar's life; and in two years more his dynasty was overthrown, and his kingdom broken up.

Of the persons mentioned in the above brief sketch, Thero, Hiero, Chromius, Xenocrates, and Thrasybulus were patrons of Pindar. For Thero he wrote two Odes (Ol. ii. iii.), for Hiero four (Ol., i.; Pyth. i. ii. iii.), for Chromius two (Nem. i. ix.), for Xenocrates and Thrasybulus two (Pyth. vi.; Isthm. ix.)

After the fall of Hiero's family, its chief adherents gathered anew to re-found the city of Camarina: and for one of these, Psaumis (about B.C. 452), Pindar wrote his two last Odes (Ol. iv. v.)

The other Sicilian or Italian Greeks commemorated by Pindaric Odes were Agesias, an honoured inhabitant of Syracuse in the reign of Hiero (Ol. vi.); Ergoteles of Himera, originally a refugee from Crete, who made Sicily his adopted country (Ol. xii.); Midas, the flute-player of Agrigentum (Pyth. xii.); and a boy named Agesidamus, of the tribe of the Italian or Western Locrians, to whom Pindar addressed two

* It is possible, however, that Xenocrates died before the fall of the dynasty.

Odes, the first being little more than a promise of the second, which followed at an interval of some years, and opens with an apology for the delay (Ol. x. xi.)

The circumstance that so many of Pindar's Odes were addressed to Sicilians certainly gives a great probability to the traditions of Pindar's sojourn at the court of Hiero. This probability is increased by certain expressions which the poet employs to describe his own relations, especially, with Hiero and Thrasybulus. Towards Xenocrates, again, he employs the language of one who had seen and admired his conduct as a host and as a citizen. His language to Hiero implies a very considerable degree of intimacy, and an acquaintance with his character and the surroundings of his court that could scarcely be derived from mere hearsay. An extremely sharp attack, also, which he makes on some "pair" of rivals (probably Simonides and Bacchylides), seems prompted by the recollection of some unpleasant scene in Thero's palace, —some combination of the "pair" to silence or otherwise put down the Theban poet.*

> "Vain their lore, base pair! that croak like crows
> Round the heavenly bird of Jove."

From another passage it appears that the same or similar influences were at work also against Pindar in Hiero's court, and that Pindar had friends at Syracuse who kept him informed on the subject. "The guile of slanderers," he cries, "is fatal alike to their dupe and their victim!"†

* Ol. ii. 87. † Pyth. ii. 76.

"Theirs is the crafty fox's mood;
Yet what, the while, such gainful cunning's gain?
Like loaded nets they drudge beneath the main—
I, the buoyant cork, that rides unscathed above the flood!"

And he adds that he knows his friends and his foes, and will love the one, and dart like a wolf upon the other.

The Third Pythian also expresses a wish to visit Hiero (about B.C. 474), and Boeckh thinks it probable that this wish was carried out next year, and that the First Nemean to Chromius (B.C. 473), the First Olympian to Hiero, and the Twelfth Olympian to Ergoteles (both probably B.C. 472), were composed by Pindar in Sicily.

Yet the external evidence for this visit is extremely slight. The sojourn of Simonides and Bacchylides at Hiero's court is attested on good authority: not so that of Pindar. And it is at least remarkable, though it seems to have escaped the notice of commentators, that Xenophon's imaginary dialogue "Hiero," composed certainly within a century of Pindar's death,* and exhibiting the most complete extant picture of the intercourse between Hiero and Simonides, says not a word of any visit to Hiero from Pindar.

The legends of Olympia, which Pindar has introduced into his Odes, comprise (1) the adventures of Pelops; (2) the institution of the contests by Heracles at the tomb of Pelops, the planting and naming of Mount Cronius, and the introduction of the olive-trees which supplied the crown; (3) the first celebra-

* Xenophon can hardly have been born later than B.C. 442, the supposed year of Pindar's death.

tion of the Olympic festival, and the winners of its earliest prizes; (4) the transference by Heracles to the Tyndarids, Castor and Polydeuces (or Pollux), of his self-chosen duty of superintending the games, when his own deification removed him to another sphere. These legends are embodied in the First, Third, and Eleventh Olympian Odes, which may now be considered briefly in succession.

The First Olympian Ode was written for Hiero, and commemorates his success in the horse-race with a horse bearing the appropriate name of Pherenicus, or "the victor." It opens with the oft-quoted maxim, "Best is water,"* and proceeds at once to the occasion of the Ode. Water is the first of boons, gold the first of treasures, and Olympia the first of festivals. Olympia it is that wakes our lays, as we approach the happy home of Hiero!

Then follows a picture of that home, its magnificence and culture, and an allusion (apparently) to the poet's personal knowledge of it.

> "With rod of righteousness the fields he sways
> Of pastoral Sicily, and culls the prime
> Of virtue, while around him blaze
> The brightest flowers of rhyme,
> Such festal lays as oft we wake
> Around his board."

Then the victorious racer is set before us—

> "As by Alphëus' banks he sped.
> No need of spur—on, on he flies!
> And bears his master toward the prize."

* Repeated in Ol. iii. 44.

And then an allusion to the glory which this victory has given to Hiero in the Peloponnese, "the isle of Pelops," introduces us at once to the legendary history of that hero.

He was the son of Tantalus, and the favourite of Poseidon the Sea-god. Tantalus, the Lydian king, had enjoyed, but forfeited by some crime, the privilege of an extraordinary intimacy with the gods—he had shared their feasts, and entertained them at his table in return. Yet this favoured prince became at last a terrible monument of divine vengeance. He was sent to join Ixion and Sisyphus in Tartarus, tormented (according to some authors) by immersion in a pool of water, which receded whenever his lips approached it, while fruit just out of reach hung perpetually above his head.* Pindar follows a different legend, and imagines a huge stone, ever threatening to fall, poised magically above his head.

And why this change? Legends, or according to Pindar "some envious neighbour," told a hideous tale of a "caldron," in which Tantalus, preparing to feast the gods, had boiled the mangled body of his son. The frightful banquet had begun, when the crime was discovered, and Clotho, the goddess of Fate, drew from the caldron the revivified body of Pelops. One shoulder only was missing—Ceres had unfortunately swallowed it; but the place of the absent limb was ingeniously supplied by one of ivory! And so Tantalus was hurled to his well-merited doom in Tartarus. Pindar will have none of this revolting legend. The

* Hence our word "to tantalise."

crime of Tantalus is transmuted into an unpardonable yet amiable weakness. The food of the gods had given him immortality, and, Prometheus-like, he had bestowed on his fellow-men nectar and ambrosia stolen from the stores of heaven. Hence his punishment, and hence the cessation of the intercourse between his family and the gods. Pelops was sent back to join the fleeting race of men.

He grew up, and sought himself a bride—Hippodameia, daughter of Œnomaüs, king of Pisa. But the lady's hand could only be won by victory in a chariot-race, and the penalty of defeat was death. In his difficulty the lover appealed to Poseidon, and not in vain. At midnight, beside the lonely sea, he called and the god appeared. "Win me this bride, Poseidon! I implore thee by the memory of old affection. Thirteen suitors already hath Œnomaüs slain—it is a fearful peril"—

"Yet direst perils bravest hearts befit.
Die must we all—then why in darkness sit,
Chewing the cud of eld, unknown to fame,
Stranger to all that graces life? No! set am I to dare the strife;
Fulfil thou then my cherished aim!
He spake, nor vainly prayed: Poseidon gave
His golden car, and winged coursers brave."

So Œnomaüs and the maiden *fell* * both at once, says Pindar (making one of those audacious puns that so often surprise us in serious Greek poetry)—Œnomaüs

* Literally, "he *took* (*i.e.*, slew) Œnomaüs, and (took) the maid to wife."

fell slain, his daughter fell to the conqueror. Six noble sons she bare him; and now he rests a deified hero, consecrating with his tomb the scene of his successful race. There to this day the noblest of Greece vie in friendly contests, and the victors enjoy for life all bliss that triumphs can bring.

And now a lay for Hiero! wisest and best of men that ever graced a poet's song. Long may he prosper, and earn yet loftier praises. The gifts of men differ—his is kingship, mine is poesy. I may not rival his bliss, but I am content with my own—to associate with victors, and excel all Greeks in song!

So the poem closes.

The Third Olympian Ode is addressed to Thero of Acragas, victor in the chariot-race. It was composed for performance at a feast in Acragas in honour of the great Twin-heroes to whom (as already mentioned) Heracles had bequeathed the superintendence of his games.

These accordingly, with their sister Helen, are invoked at starting, and then the poet passes to the occasion of his Ode—the recent victory at Olympia, which demands his choicest lay for the son of Ænesidamus. Well has Thero earned such praise; the fair award of the "Ætolian arbiter" (*i. e.*, the Eleian * judge) has crowned him with the olive that Heracles brought of old from the distant north, the marvellous land of the Hyperboreans, the shady fountains of Ister (the Danube).

* The Eleians, who in Pindar's day regulated the contests, were regarded as immigrants from Ætolia.

He had reared already the altar of his father Zeus, the centre of worship at Olympia; the full harvest moon shone upon the lists; but the "Altis," the sacred grove, was still to come,—the "Stadium," the race-course, still lacked the olives which were to furnish the victor's crown.

"Already, by rocky Alpheus' side, to glorious contests sanctified
Those quinquennial lists were set:—
And Cronian Pelops' dells were treeless yet!
All naked to the scorching sun they lay:
So to Ister's shores he took his way."

He had visited that land before, bearing to Diana the wondrous stag with horns of gold from the jagged Arcadian mountains, whose capture had been one of the Twelve Labours imposed upon him by his harsh kinsman Eurystheus, "a little more than kin and less than kind," and submitted to by the hero in expiation of an involuntary crime. Thither had he come, and gazed entranced on the wondrous trees of the Northern land:—

"And longing seized his soul to deck with these
His twelve-fold course."

With these, then, he returned to Pisa, and surely *now* too his presence is among us; surely with his successors the Tyndaridæ he comes to share the feast! Gloriously does Thero honour those Tyndaridæ, and gloriously have they rewarded him. What blisses may exist beyond a mortal's reach "I know not, nor I greatly care not"*—

* Shakespeare, Richard II.

"But sure as water knows no peer, and best
Is gold of riches, Thero's deeds have pressed
To fame's last cape! What further lies, is barred alike to fools and wise:—
I will not venture there, else vain were I!"

Thus, having in fancy conducted his patron to the fabled Pillars of Heracles, the limits of the ancient world, which later authors identified with the Straits of Gibraltar, Pindar leaves him to "the contemplation of his own perfections"—not quite a god, but all that man may be.

The Eleventh Olympian Ode is addressed to the boy-wrestler Agesidamus of Western Locris. The poet had been an eyewitness of the victory* which it records, and had hastily composed a brief Ode for performance at a banquet immediately following upon the victory. This poem, which figures in our collection as the Tenth Olympian, after an allusion to the circumstances of its production—a timely service rendered at a moment's notice by the bard to his patron,—goes on to promise a future lay more worthy of its occasion, to be sung when Agesidamus reaches his Italian home:—

"If Heaven empower this mortal to unfold
Poesy's bright flowers: and so,
Agesidamus, for thy prowess know—
Son of Archestratus—my songs anew
Shall gild your golden bays,
And bring the clans of Western Locrians praise."

And the Ode closes with a tribute to the chivalry and culture of these Locrians, ingrained in them as cunning is in foxes, or courage in lions.

* Cf. line 100 of the Ode.

Of that promise the Eleventh Ode was the fulfilment, but it had been so long delayed as to suggest the need of an apology. "Forgive me! I had forgotten my debt, but now it shall be paid with usury."

Then the poet affects a hesitation. So many themes crowd in upon his fancy: which shall he choose? Shall he dwell on the culture and prowess of the Locrians? or on their national legends—the hero Cycnus who had dared to encounter Heracles? or on the merits of Agesidamus's trainer Ilas, the Achilles to this young Patroclus, whose instruction had developed natural gifts without which all teaching would have been vain? At last a theme is chosen, on which Pindar had doubtless resolved from the first, the legend of the first Olympian festival.

Rapidly the war of Heracles against the Epeian monarch Augeas is sketched. The king was slain; his city sacked; and from its spoils, collected in Pisa, the cost of the first "Olympia" was defrayed. Then it was that the "Hill of Cronus," a nameless snowy summit in the olden days of Œnomaüs and Pelops, received its well-known name. The lists were set, and the first Olympian victors received their prizes. And who were these? A catalogue is given, with all due detail:—

"In the stadium best, to the goal that pressed,
Thy son, Licymnius! showed his speed,
Œonus, leader of Midea's host: Tegea of Echemus made her boast
In wrestling famed: and the boxer's meed
To Tiryns town Doryclus bore:
Mantinean Samus with coursers four

In the chariots won—Halirothius' son:
And all unerring flew Phrastor's spear:
With strength unrivalled Eniceus flung the massy stone
in his grasp that swung,
And loud and long was his comrades' cheer!"

A tedious list to us, perhaps,—but who can tell what associations it suggested to Pindar's audience?

Then the fair moon rose on the scene, and revelry succeeded to the contests:—

"And straight around rang from each banquet sweet
Such songs as yet the victors greet."

"We too, in our later days, will raise that strain, and sing of Zeus and of victory. Long have we delayed, but our lay will be all the more welcome, when at last from its Theban fount it reaches the Locrian land. Hope deferred only heightens the joy of the aged father when at last the long-expected heir is born. So will it be with our song, long promised, long withheld."

"With eager joy the glorious house I greet!
Watering with dews of honey sweet
The Locrians' well-peopled state, thy noble son I
celebrate,
Archestratus,—as erst I saw him gain
Victory by Olympia's fane
On that auspicious day,
In form and feature fair,
Blent with such youthful bloom, as drove decay
Far from Ganymede, and brought him heavenly life with
Zeus to share."

No such thread of a common legend as we have traced in the above Odes unites the remaining poems

of the Olympian group. Thus the Eighth, addressed to an Æginetan, deals with legends which form the staple of the Nemean Odes. Four other important Olympian Odes respectively introduce us to the mythical annals of Arcadia, Rhodes, Corinth, and Northern Greece; but these must be reserved for future consideration, and the present chapter may close with a notice of four short Odes addressed to conquerors at Olympia,—mere trifles as compared with Pindar's greatest poems, yet trifles which, like the sketches of a Dürer or a Michelangelo, exhibit in their every line the hand of a master.

The Fourth and Fifth Olympian Odes were written to commemorate a single victory, that of Psaumis of Camarina in the race of mule-cars. The fourth appears to have been sung on the evening of the race by the band of revellers who escorted Psaumis to offer his thanks at the altar of Olympian Zeus. The fifth was performed after the conqueror's return home in solemn procession to the shrine of his city's local patroness, the Nymph Camarina, whom the poet invokes as a daughter of Ocean.

The first of these two little poems (Ol. iv.) contains one of Pindar's most audacious metaphors. He wishes to convey in a single word a picture of the doomed giant Typho writhing in unavailing struggles beneath the roots of Ætna, pinioned and crushed by the huge mass that soars above him. Now in the species of mouse-trap which Greek householders favoured, it was provided that a heavy piece of wood called the "ipos" or "press" should drop upon the rash intruder.

Wherefore Pindar, scorning to beat about the bush with explanation or apology for the phrase, calls Ætna outright—

"The wind-swept *press* of Typho."

Psaumis was an elderly man, and his appearance in the lists seems to have provoked irreverent jokes in some quarters. But Pindar soothes his patron, and shames the levity of the jesters, by recalling the myth of another grey-haired champion, the hero-son of Clymenus. He too had been scorned by his rivals; but he recked little for their scorn when he took his prize from the fair hands of Queen Hypsipylè, and read a lesson to his detractors:—

"Such is my speed! And know
My hands too, and heart are so!
On heads that have not passed their prime,
Locks of grey full often grow,
Ere the appointed time!"

Camarina, it will be remembered, had lately been repeopled by the expelled adherents of Hiero's dynasty at Syracuse (B.C. 461); thus, then, in the Fifth Ode, Pindar describes the new houses rising on the banks of the Hipparis, and constructed of logs brought downstream from the interior. The river-god, says the poet, builds and blesses the city—

"Hipparis, that waters all thy host with honoured urns,
Gathering a stately forest round his banks of storied homes,—
Guided of whose grace thy people fast from dearth to glory comes!"

Thus the alchemy of song transmutes the rough log-huts of the new settlement into a stately forest, with a god to plant it, to water it, and to give it increase.

The Ode for Ergoteles of Himera, victor in the long-race (Ol. xii.), stands in one respect alone among the compositions of Pindar. It is from first to last the expression of a single thought—"Inscrutable are the ways of Providence."

Civil strife had driven Ergoteles from his native Cretan city. But this seeming misfortune, says the poet, has proved a blessing in disguise. Had he remained at home in Crete—

"Cooped like a cock from foes beyond its pen"—

he would have frittered away in petty insular competitions the gift of speed which, under more favourable auspices, has ripened into victory at Olympia, Pytho, and the Isthmus. Yet who could have foreseen such a result of exile? How little men know of their real good! Verily, "a man cannot tell what shall be."

This one thought underlies the whole Ode. It opens with an invocation of Fortune, the saviour-goddess, piloting ships at sea, wars and councils by land. This leads to a fine description of the vanity of human expectations, and the fortunes of Ergoteles are used to point the moral of the poem.

Very graceful and pleasing is the little Ode (Ol. xiv.) in honour of the boy-racer Asopichus of Orchomenus, in Bœotia. Pindar, when it pleased him, could touch a theme as lightly and daintily as Horace himself. As the old Greek scholiast remarked, when he reached at

last an easy passage in his Thucydides, "Here the lion smiled!" It is occupied chiefly with an invocation of the Graces—the three sister-deities, Joy, Brightness, and Song; and then at its close, with a charming touch of natural feeling, the orphan-boy is reminded of his lost father, and Echo or Rumour is summoned to bear to the dead Cleudamus the tidings of his son's success:—

"How by the glens of glorious Pisa he
Crowned his young locks with plumes of victory."

Similarly in another Ode,* the victory of the Æginetan boy, Alcimedon, is described as the theme of mutual congratulations among deceased members of his house in Hades:—

"Iphion (by Rumour, Hermes' daughter, taught)
Shall to Callimachus repeat, what pride
Zeus in Olympia to their house hath brought."

Thus, with a simple and cheerful faith, Pindar enforces that creed which Aristotle tells us it would be "too unkind" to reject, that "the good fortunes of kinsmen count for something to the dead."

* Ol. viii. 81.

CHAPTER VII.

SICILY.—THE SYRACUSAN AND AGRIGENTINE DYNASTIES.

We saw in the last chapter that all the Odes embodying local legends of Olympia were addressed to Sicilians, and that two out of the three were addressed *to* Sicilian kings—Hiero of Syracuse and Thero of Acragas. Four other Odes were written by the poet for these princes —three for Hiero * and one for Thero; † and though these Odes are not connected by a common mythological substratum, it may be convenient to consider them together. We shall thus have before us a *group* of Odes illustrating Pindar's relations with the dynasties of Syracuse and Acragas; and this group may be completed by the addition of four more Odes, two ‡ of which are addressed to Chromius, Hiero's viceroy in Ætna, and two § to kinsmen of Thero, Xenocrates and his son Thrasybulus. In this group, as in all the Odes addressed to Sicilians, we shall find the poet less careful than usual to select his mythical illustrations from the national and family legends of his patrons. The practice which he here adopts is rather to select

* Pyth. i. ii. iii. † Ol. ii.
‡ Nem. i. ix. § Pyth. vi.; Isthm. ii.

some topic of encomium or admonition suitable to the present circumstances of the person whom he is addressing, and then, irrespective of any further considerations, to choose from the rich stores of his mythological knowledge any legend which will serve to illustrate his point.

Thus in the Second Pythian, addressed to Hiero, the chief myth which the Ode contains is introduced solely with a didactic purpose. It is the tale of Ixion's twofold guilt, unnatural murder and unlawful love. The murder is briefly mentioned, but Pindar dwells at length on the criminal infatuation which induced Ixion to attempt an intrigue with the queen of the gods—Hera, the spouse of Zeus.

> "Justly he suffered for his sin
> A signal doom."

With bitter mockery of his presumptuous rival, Zeus caused a cloud to assume the shape of Hera; and then, in the moment of his fancied triumph, Ixion found himself hurled down to Tartarus, and suspended for ever in torment on a revolving wheel. The gods had admitted him to friendly intercourse with themselves, and he had abused their kindness. And now, says Pindar, his fate is a perpetual lesson to mankind

> "That still should gratitude good deeds repay."

To explain the introduction of this legend, we must refer to the general moral teaching of the Ode, and to the knowledge which we obtain from other authorities as to the events of Hiero's life. Now the Ode, though full of lofty compliments to Hiero's natural capacities

for virtue, abounds also in grave and pointed warnings against particular faults—jealousy, impatience, love of flattery, trust in evil counsellors, and the like. And it appears that the Ode was written at a time when Hiero's tendency to these defects seemed likely to lead him into serious guilt and disastrous folly. He had but just succeeded to his kingdom, and his brother Polyzelus held a position in it little, if at all, inferior in power to his own. Nay, by marrying the widow of the late king, Polyzelus had taken a step which, in the eyes of a jealous rival, might easily appear as a preliminary to the assertion of a claim to the throne. Yielding either to his own fears or to the suggestions of evil advisers, Hiero seems to have formed a scheme which recalls the Biblical narrative of David and Uriah. Polyzelus should be sent to perish in attacking a neighbouring city, and the queen should become the wife of Hiero. Polyzelus, however, was warned and fled. He appealed for protection to Thero of Acragas, the son and heir of his late brother's old comrade Ænesidamus, and his appeal was successful. A demand on Hiero's part for the extradition of Polyzelus was disregarded by Thero, and a war seemed imminent, but was somehow averted. We have already alluded to the story that the quarrel was appeased by the mediation of Pindar's rival, Simonides.

These events probably explain the mythical contents of the Second Pythian. Hiero's foolish and guilty designs on the wife of Polyzelus, the murderous scheme which his jealous fear of his brother suggested, the unseemliness of such a quarrel as seemed impend-

ing between the once friendly houses of Deinomenes and Ænesidamus—the rashness, the violence, and the disregard of natural ties and obligations involved in the whole transaction—are rebuked by implication in the poet's strictures on Ixion. Yet Pindar's warnings are conveyed with such tact that the Ode never ceases to seem an encomium. He dwells on the innate nobility of Hiero's character, and he urges the king to escape his temptations, not by becoming better, but by being what he is :—

"Learn thy true self, and live it!"

Flattery and evil counsels, he hints, are putting Hiero into a false position. Let him be himself, and no further reformation will be needed. Was ever an unpalatable warning conveyed with more consummate tact? The very reproach assumes the guise of a compliment. The censor is at the same time a panegyrist.

No less delicately does Pindar hint his disapproval of another defect in Hiero's character, a tendency to avarice. He enlarges, not on the evil effects of the vice, but on the advantages of the virtue which is its opposite, and contrives simultaneously to pay tribute to the magnificence of Hiero's position :—

"Wealth is thine, and bounty more may its powers unfold :
Sovereign thou of mighty nation, and tower-crowned town!
Boasteth any, that ever Hellas in days of old
Bare a son as peerless in wealth, or in high renown?
—Empty his vaunt, his labour lost!

I'll climb Song's flowery prow, and there recite
Thy valour's praise. Ever doth martial might
Youthful vigour glorify. The prouder, then, thy boast:
For not thy worth in wars alone, afoot or mounted, thou hast shown!
But riper Wisdom's renown is thine,
Then fearless flows my praise and free. Farewell! these songs I send to thee,
Like Tyrian wares o'er the foaming brine."

So also Hiero is not directly warned to abandon his schemes of aggression against Thero, but he is gently reminded that thus far his reign has brought to his people the blessings of peace—blessings which extend also to his neighbours the Italian Locrians:—

"Deinomenes' son, of thee
Sings at her door each Locrian maid, and looks abroad no more afraid,
From horrors of war by thy power set free!"

Pindar does not expressly urge Hiero to contrast the blessings of this peaceful present with the gloomy future which he is preparing for himself by war with Thero. He does not say in so many words, "Look on this picture and on that." But his moral is perfectly clear, and Hiero could hardly fail to draw it for himself.

With all his tact Pindar is no mere courtier, prepared to ignore his patron's faults. He might easily have avoided the dangerous topic altogether. That he did not do so, proves both that he really cared for Hiero—or why should he have sought to reform him?—and

that he honestly believed in the intrinsic goodness of his patron—or how could he hope that his admonitions would take effect? But it is not surprising that the poet's caution should have exposed him in some quarters to the charge of servility; or that his mingling of open praise and covert censure should have puzzled later readers, and led them to form strangely different estimates of Hiero's character: some describing him as the ideal king—brave, generous, trustful, and affectionate; while to others he appears as a vulgar tyrant—mean, grasping, and treacherous. A right understanding of Pindar's language presents us with another and probably a truer view. Hiero had great qualities and great faults; his position was one of great advantages, but also of great temptations: he was necessarily exposed to the machinations of evil counsellors, but his ears were not closed to the admonitions of honest friends. He was not an Alfred, but neither was he a Tiberius or a Caligula.

The moral lessons of the Second Pythian reappear to some extent in the Third and First Odes of the same group, also addressed to Hiero. In each we find the same mingling of praises and warnings,—warnings against ambition, avarice, rashness, seductions of evil counsellors, and the like. But, unlike the Second Pythian, neither the first nor the third is mainly occupied with these topics. In the third we find a prominent place assigned to the myth of Asclepius (Æsculapius), the legendary inventor of medicine. And, though certain points in the narrative seem introduced with a didactic purpose—hinting at the evil

consequences of presumption, avarice, and trust in seductive advisers—this is not the immediate and obvious occasion of the story. Hiero was suffering from a painful and dangerous illness, and apparently had invited the poet to visit him. This leads Pindar to express a wish that he could call back from their graves the old masters of Greek leechcraft, to furnish his friend with the relief which he seeks in vain from the degenerate practitioners of his own day. "Could I but reawaken Asclepius, or his teacher Chiron," says the poet, "how gladly would I cross the seas to Hiero, and bring him Health as well as Songs!"

"Oh, if still within his grot
Dwelt Chiron sage, and this my lay
Had spells to bind his soul, him had I won
E'en now to send such healer to the good,
(Of Phœbus or his sire,* some true-born son!)
My bark should cleave the Ionian foam, and seek the hospitable home
Of Ætna's chief, by Arethusa's flood."

And in this connection Pindar relates the whole story of Asclepius, the son of Phœbus, miraculously rescued from the flames of his mother's funeral pyre, trained—like Jason and Achilles and many another youthful hero — in the hospitable cave of Chiron, appearing afterwards as the most skilled physician of his day, healing the sick, and even at last raising the dead,—an interference with the prerogative of Zeus which was punished by the instant destruction of both the Healer and his patient.

* *i.e.*, of Zeus.

From this story Pindar passes to moral and philosophical reflections, adapted to the circumstances of his patron, and illustrated by appropriate myths. He consoles Hiero for his sufferings by reminding him that not even the old heroic kings, Peleus and Cadmus, "happiest of mortals," were wholly blest. He recalls the misfortunes of Cadmus's daughters, and the early death of Peleus's only son, Achilles. And the Ode closes with another reference to mythology, the immortal fame of Nestor and Sarpedon, which Hiero may rival if he imitates their virtues:—

"But few there are such bliss may lightly gain."

The opening verses of the First Pythian have already been quoted at the end of the first chapter. They contain that "Invocation of the Lyre" which is imitated by our own poet Gray, in his well-known "Ode on the Progress of Poesy." The mythological element in this Ode is slight. There is a brief allusion to the lame hero Philoctetes, whose assistance was needed to enable the Greeks of old to capture Troy. Hiero, physically infirm, yet a valiant and successful general, is compared to this fabled champion. And, complimenting Hiero on the constitution which he has established in his new city Ætna, "true to the good old Dorian type," Pindar pauses for a moment to dwell on the legendary migration of the Dorians from Northern Greece to Amyclæ in Laconia.

But the chief purpose of the Ode is to celebrate the military exploits of Hiero and his family, and especially their victories at Himera and Cumæ, which had

crushed for the time the two most powerful foes of the Greeks in Sicily, the Phœnicians of Carthage and the Tyrrhenians of Etruria. Thus Pindar describes the battle, and prays that its effects may be lasting:—

"Oh, grant that in peace the mingled host,
Phœnician and Tuscan, henceforth may dwell, late vanquished on Cumæ's coast!
Mourn they at home their navies brought by Syracusa's king to nought,
Who, headlong from the swift ship's side, their warriors hurled beneath the tide,
And rescued Hellas from serfdom sore.
For Salamis be Athens famed;
Nor less brave Sparta's feats proclaimed,
That laid beneath Cithæron low
The archer-Medians! But, by Himera's shore,
Guerdon we with praise the might of Hiero's house, that crushed the foe!"

The First Nemean is divided pretty equally between two themes, the virtues of Chromius (viceroy, as has been said, of Hiero in Ætna) and the myth of the infant Heracles. Allusion has been made in a previous chapter to the apparently gratuitous introduction of this legend; but a Nemean victory would naturally remind the poet of Heracles the slayer of the Nemean lion, and possibly the two snakes strangled by the infant hero may have been intended by Pindar to typify the combination of fierce barbarian foes over which the nascent Syracusan dynasty had triumphed so magnificently at Himera. Or he may have intended a compliment to the new civilisation which Chromius had established at Ætna, victorious over the deadly an-

tagonisms of foreign war and internal disorder. The myth is told with admirable force and vividness, but is too long to quote entire. The following passage from it must suffice. The snakes have just entered the chamber—

"But as they came, the babe unterrified
Lifted his little head, and his first battle tried.
With either hand one horrid throat he grasped
Beneath those jaws of terror gaping wide.
Fast in that knot the monsters gasped,
Loosed their long spires, and dróoped their head, and died.
Pierced by a pang of sudden fear,
Hurried the matrons near,
Who their kind vigil kept
Attentive where the mother slept.
And forth the mother rushed, *her feet all bare*,
E'en as she lay, in hope those monstrous beasts to scare.
At the wild cry the Thebans thronged amain
In brazen armour fain:
Amphitryon came in speed
Brandishing high his naked blade."—(S.)

Could anything be more graphic, or more true, than that picture of the mother rushing in "with feet all bare"? The trusty retainers stay to arm themselves; even Amphitryon—the putative father of the babe—lingers at least to seize a sword. But the mother can wait for nothing. "E'en as she lay," she rushes in, and outstrips all other succour.

The so-called Ninth Nemean really commemorates a victory won at Sicyon, and its mythical contents are drawn from the ancient local legends of that city, and of the Argive leader Adrastus, who had married a

Sicyonian princess. For the rest, the Ode contains a passing allusion to new troubles brewing against Sicily from its dangerous neighbour Carthage, and a magnificent panegyric on the military exploits of Chromius, whose valiant youth, says the poet, has surely entitled him to hope for a peaceful and honoured old age. The close of the poem presents us with one of Pindar's ingenious and striking combinations of fact and fancy. The wine of song must flow for Chromius. And what bowl so fit to hold it as the silver goblets which Chromius has brought from Sicyon—the prize of his recent victory? Thus boldly and dexterously does Pindar's fancy glide from the concrete to the ideal world—from objects of sense like the visible and tangible race-cups, to objects of imagination like the immaterial wine of song.

We come now to the three Odes addressed to members of the royal house of Agrigentum. Thero, to whom the Second Olympian is addressed, was evidently a loved and honoured patron of the poet. But in Pindar's portraiture of him we miss those graphic touches which make the personality of Hiero stand out so clearly in the imagination of Pindar's readers. The unmixed encomium which Pindar lavishes on the king of Acragas leaves us with but a vague idea of his real character, or of the poet's conception of it. Yet this encomium is very fine of its kind. The valour, the wisdom, and the kindness of Thero are portrayed in brilliant colours, though the outline be somewhat vague and sketchy. The gem of the whole poem,

however, is undoubtedly its description of the life after death—

"How swiftest vengeance waits the guilty dead;
And for the sins men sin in realms of day,
'Neath earth a stern judge speaks the sentence dread
Of fate's resistless sway.
But, by day alike and night,
Upon the righteous rises ever light;
They dwell in a life unvexed of toil, nor need to task the weary soil,
Nor waters of the main,
For scant subsistence. Tearless days they gain,
With those Heaven-honoured ones in Truth that joy;
While sinners cower 'neath weight of dire annoy.

Happiest they that thrice endure
Through life and death, and still from sin are pure.
For such Zeus leads to Cronus' tower, where round about the island bower
Of blessed spirits strays
Breath of sea airs, and golden flow'rets blaze,
Some on fair trees, some of the waters bred:
Wherewith themselves they garland hands and head."

The Ode ends with a fine outburst of admiration and gratitude:—

"Than Thero's, in a hundred years, no land
Shall rear you kinder heart nor freer hand!
Though envy strive his glories to deface
(No generous foe, but nursed in natures base,
That loves to talk the good man's praise away):
Yet, as the sand still foils the reckoner's count,
Such are the joys we owe him. Who shall say
How boundless their amount?"

The Sixth Pythian and the Second Isthmian both commemorate victories of Thero's brother Xenocrates. They are addressed, however, not to the victor himself, but to his son Thrasybulus. Pindar dwells warmly on the generous hospitality and kindliness of both father and son, and on the strong affection—honourable to both—which existed between them. In the race which forms the theme of the Sixth Pythian, Thrasybulus seems to have acted as charioteer to his father—and this incident suggests to Pindar the legend of another son who had rendered good service to his father Antilochus, son of the aged Nestor. In a skirmish under the walls of Troy, Nestor found himself in imminent danger: the terrible Memnon's spear was already uplifted to slay him, and in dismay he called to his son for aid—

"Nor wasted on the earth his words he flung:
Firm the hero stood,
And for his father gave his blood.
Thus in his day to all the young
Seemed that achiever of a deed of might
Pattern most fair of filial bravery."

"All of this is now gone by," adds the poet; but of the men of our own time Thrasybulus comes nearest to the old type of loyal sonship. And in other things, too, he is a worthy nephew of Thero—generous, pure, modest, cultured, and valiant—

"Kind of heart, and such a friend
To all that share in his feasts, as ne'er
So sweet was fretwork of the bee!"

The Second Isthmian was written seemingly after the death of Xenocrates. The dynasty of Thero had fallen, but Thrasybulus still lived in Acragas. His personal virtues, or the favour of Hiero, sufficed to maintain him unmolested amid the citizens who had overthrown his kinsman's sovereignty, but not, apparently, to silence the resentful murmurs of some against the memory of the fallen house. Pindar hints that to some of these the praise of Xenocrates's exploits may prove unwelcome. Yet he urges Thrasybulus not to shrink from praising them. And, if we may trust the poet's description, Xenocrates was a father of whom a son might well be proud. He is depicted as the very mirror of Grecian chivalry, a genial gracious prince, his innate goodness expressing itself in his very aspect, keeping up the racing traditions of his family on principle, as a duty demanded of him by his position.

And as for his hospitality, it passed all bounds,—ranged (says Pindar) "from Phasis to Nile," or, as we might say, "from China to Peru:"—

> "Courteous his eye and bland. He loved to feed,
> As Grecians use, the gallant steed;
> Each holy sacrifice and feast
> He fed, a liberal guest:
> And oh! his hospitable mind
> Spread its full canvas to the wind,
> Wide as to Phasis' distant shore the while,
> Or furthest Nile."—(S.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IAMIDS.—DIAGORAS OF RHODES.

Among the many religious antiquities of Olympia in Pindar's time was an oracle, far less celebrated indeed than that of Apollo at Delphi, yet greatly venerated, and frequently consulted by such competitors in the games as desired to anticipate the verdict of the judges. Its answers were given, not as at Delphi by an inspired priestess, but by a sacerdotal caste or family who watched the sacrifices burning on the great altar of Olympian Zeus, and interpreted the phenomena which these presented according to certain traditional rules handed down as a family secret from father to son.

The family tie in Greece was exceedingly strong, and it was much cemented by the practice which prevailed of keeping certain sciences and religious rites confined as a sort of heirloom to particular families. Thus the medical art of Greece remained for a long time chiefly in the hands of the Asclepiads, who claimed descent from the hero Asclepius, the mythical inventor of medicine. Again, at Athens, the state religion was administered chiefly by a family known as

the Eumolpids, who professed to have inherited their functions from Eumolpus, founder of the Eleusinian mysteries, and first priest at Athens of Demeter (Ceres) and Dionysus (Bacchus). Every Greek house of any distinction had its own particular religious rites, and these, it was believed, could only be performed by members of the family. Accordingly, if such a set of rites was for any reason incorporated in a state religion, the members of the house to which it was attached became, as it were, a sacerdotal caste in the state, enjoying certain privileges and immunities, and reverenced as the channels through which the favour of particular deities passed to the community. Still it was not necessary that they should make their priesthood their main profession, or be excluded by reason of it from the ordinary occupations and functions of a citizen. With some few exceptions, the members of a priestly family might marry, might engage in any pursuits that they thought fit, and might even serve in the army. No such duties of instructing the laity, and the like, as have been associated in modern times with the clerical profession, were assigned to the Greek priesthoods. Nor were they in any way specially called upon, either by example or by precept, to influence or direct their neighbours in matters of morality. Beyond the maintenance of their peculiar religious rites, and the care of the temples and altars with which these were associated, a sacerdotal family had no distinctive duties to the state; and a few of its members, specially appointed to discharge such functions, would in practice suffice to fulfil all that was required of them in

this respect. The priesthood of the others was probably a mere honourable sinecure, a sort of honorary canonry in the temple-chapter, procuring for them a certain consideration in the eyes of their fellow-citizens, but no more necessarily connected with the performance of religious duties than a "courtesy title" in England with the functions of the legislature.

Again, the different sacerdotal families in the various states of Greece at no time constituted a collective national priesthood. Greek religion was, in fact, not so much an organised system as an aggregate of separate systems in a loose permissive communion. Between tribes of the same stock there was, however, more approach to uniformity of religious belief and ritual; and in these, accordingly, the several priesthoods were drawn into some sort of informal intercourse and connection. And when, as often happened, a state desired to incorporate into its own religion some part of a neighbour's ritual, some members of the priesthood attached to this were usually invited over to introduce and maintain it in its new home. Such persons and their descendants thenceforward enjoyed a distinguished and often lucrative position in their adopted state. And thus in Grecian history we meet with frequent instances of a sacerdotal family widely dispersed among the different nations of a common stock, retaining wherever they went their original family name, meeting from time to time at the altar of their original "cultus," and cherishing by mutual intercourse the memory of their common descent.

Such a family were the Iamids, hereditary priests

of Olympian Zeus, and custodians and interpreters of his oracle at Olympia. We find various members of this race engaged, from time to time, during the course of Greek history, as soothsayers in the many scattered communities of Dorian Greeks, not only in Sparta or Messenia or Mantinea in the Peloponnese, but in the distant colonies of the west, at Sybaris and Croton in South Italy. When Archias the Corinthian sailed for Sicily and founded the important town of Syracuse, one or more representatives of the Iamid stock accompanied the expedition, assisted in the religious ceremonies with which the new settlement was inaugurated, and obtained a share in the heroic honours assigned, according to universal Greek custom, to the founder.

Iamus, the legendary ancestor of this priestly house, was a son of Apollo, the god of divination, and inspirer of the great oracle at Delphi. The Olympian oracle was connected, as we have seen, with the worship of Zeus; but inasmuch as for some reason the old idea of Zeus as an inspirer of prophecy* had to some extent been obscured, and Apollo, the god of Delphi, had gradually occupied the place which Zeus in this aspect had formerly filled in the imagination of the Greeks, it was to Apollo, and not to Zeus, that the Iamids saw fit to trace their origin. Their priesthood at Olympia they described as an office to which the Delphian god had specially appointed their ancestor,

* His oracle at Dodona, reputed the most ancient in Greece, was extremely famous in early times; but its fame was afterwards completely eclipsed by that of Apollo's oracle at Delphi.

and their family traditions represented him as designated for it even before the institution of the Olympic festival. Among the rituals which members of their family had inaugurated in other states of Greece, was a peculiar cultus of Hermes (Mercury) at Stymphalus in Arcadia. And it was the special branch of Iamids settled at Stymphalus to maintain this worship which supplied to Archias the priests or soothsayers who assisted him in inaugurating with due rites the foundation of his colony at Syracuse.

The Sixth Olympian Ode commemorates a victory of one of these Syracusan Iamids—Agesias, the son of Archestratus, winner in the race of mule-cars. Probably Agesias occupied an important religious position at Syracuse, and his visit to Olympia would naturally bring him into connection with the original branch of his family established there to maintain the original oracle and altar. He had also, it appears, taken occasion on his visit to Greece to renew acquaintance with his kinsmen the priests of Stymphalus, and had received from the inhabitants of that town welcome and recognition as a fellow-citizen. With a mind full of all the associations which could be suggested by such a resumption of old family ties, he had now returned to Syracuse. And in the Ode which Pindar sent to him from Thebes for performance by a chorus in Syracuse, these associations are again recalled to him; the poet recognising in the family traditions of the Iamids a theme at once adapted to gratify his patron, and to furnish himself with an admirable opportunity for displaying the choicest treasures of his genius. It is

plain, from the mere opening of this Ode, that Pindar designed it for a masterpiece: and it exhibits in a remarkable degree all the most characteristic features of his poetry—as well those which the severest criticism must admit to be beauties, as those which to a modern, though not to an ancient reader, must seem defects. The passage describing the infancy of Iamus is probably the most touching and beautiful in the whole range of Pindaric poetry. The profusion and originality of the poet's fancy are exhibited through the Ode to an extent which, even in Pindar, is truly amazing. But the rapidity of its transitions from theme to theme; the abundance of unexplained allusions; the mixture of myth, fact, and allegory throughout the poem; and the amazing audacity of expression—verging more than once on the grotesque, or even the ludicrous,—will excite in a modern reader sensations of astonishment rather than of pleasure.

Several of Pindar's longer Odes open with an elaborate metaphorical description of his poetry. He compares it to wine in a golden goblet presented by some rich lord to his daughter's spouse;* to a bath prepared by a skilful physician to refresh the weary athlete;† to a stingless arrow launched in love and not in hate.‡ Elsewhere he contrasts his own art favourably with that of the sculptor, whose images remain motionless on the pedestal, while *his* fly far and wide through Greece.§ On this occasion it is architecture that supplies his metaphor:—

* Ol. vii.; cf. Isthm. v.
† Nem. iv.
‡ Ol. ix.; cf. Ol. ii. 89.
§ Nem. v.

"As who would frame some gorgeous hall, uprears its
porch with shapely wall
On golden pillars hung:
Our song's proud front must glitter from afar."

And then an allusion to the victor's success, and the sacerdotal honours of his family at Syracuse and Olympia, suggests a comparison of him to the hero-prophet Amphiaraus, "warrior both and seer," whose death, foreseen of himself, had deprived the famous Seven against Thebes of the very "eye" of their expedition.

But the poet will not linger on this theme. With an apostrophe of amazing vigour and originality he calls on Phintias, the victor's charioteer, to yoke his mules for a new course. But it is not the mere material car, with which they had triumphed at Olympia, that they are now to draw. They are to be attached to a nobler chariot—the ideal car of the Muses. Their victory has, as it were, "sublimated their essence," and raised them into ideal beings, suitable for the ideal task demanded of them. So then through the gates of Song, whose bars fly back to admit them, the spiritualised mules and the spiritual chariot must pass, and bear the poet far away to Pitanè.

Pitanè was in sober fact a suburb or parish of Sparta; but Pindar's present purpose was not a visit to the city beside the Eurotas. In ancient Greece, as in modern Cornwall, nine-tenths of the names of places were believed to be derived from legendary saints, or, as the Greeks called them, heroes, whose shrines or tombs were still exhibited to believers as evidence for

the truth of their legends. So it was at Pitanè; the name of the place was given also to a local nymph, bride of Poseidon and mother of Evadne. It was in this latter sense of the name, as referring to a *person* and not to a *place*, that Pindar wishes to "come to Pitanè." Availing himself of the ambiguity of the name, Pindar sustains as long as possible the illusion of a journey to the place Pitanè, and then all at once the veil is withdrawn, and the object of the allegorical journey is explained. For Pitanè was the mother of Evadne, and Evadne was the mother of IAMUS! that Iamus whose story Pindar had all along designed as the centre of his poem—the prophet-hero from whom Agesias claimed descent.

For reasons of her own, Pitanè had intrusted Æpytus, an Arcadian prince, with the charge of the maiden Evadne. In his care she grew up, fair and gentle, with tresses dark as the iris. Apollo saw, and loved her; but her secret was hid from Æpytus till she became a mother. In vain did the guardian inquire her lover's name. But the strange irony of fate sent him at last to ask counsel in this matter from the lover himself!

"Forth with rage and grief at heart, to Pytho speeding fast,
Counsel he sought of the god that might such woes remove."

Ere long he returned delighted and amazed. "The god had owned his child. The child was to be a prophet, unrivalled among men, and the parent of an imperishable race. But where was the child?"

Where was he?

Specially protected by Ilithyia, the kind goddess of Birth, who stays the mother's pains, and by the Moiræ or Fates, who take charge of the new-born child and ordain his future lot, Evadne had borne a child inspired of heaven, deep in the "azure" thicket. But in her utter despair the poor mother laid her child upon the ground, and turned weeping away. Like Hagar, she could not see the child die.

And now the king was asking for the child. But four days had passed since that miserable parting of child and mother, and none had seen him since. Where was he now?

Apollo had not forgotten the son, whom his very mother had forsaken. She had

"Left him laid on earth.
But thither, lo! with honey's harmless bane
To feed him, came two heaven-sent bright-eyed snakes."

And so, when the seekers came upon him,—

"There he lay
Safe couched in reeds amid the trackless wild,
His soft limbs bathed in gold and purple ray
Of violets. So the mother bade him bear
Ever the violets' name:"

—*i.e.*, she named him Iamus: IA being the Greek name for some sort of flowers, which, if not identical with our violets, sufficiently correspond to them for the purposes of readers who are not professed botanists.

The promises of the god were fulfilled. The child became a man, and Apollo granted him a double por-

tion of prophetic gifts. His predictions were at first to be guided by direct intimations vouchsafed to him by the god; afterwards he was to read the future in the sacrifices which Heracles should ordain at Olympia

Then come allusions to the after-glory of the Iamids, and especially to their pious observance of the rites of Hermes at Stymphalus, which had won Agesias the special favour of Hermes and his father Zeus. But the thought of Stymphalus reminds Pindar of a legendary connection between his own city and Stymphalus; for was not Thebè, whose pleasant waters he is drinking even now, a daughter of the Stymphalian nymph Metopa? Here is a theme on which he cannot be silent—

"Meseemeth a whetstone shrills at my tongue!"

And, full of this patriotic fervour, he bursts into an ardent protest against the scornful nickname which their livelier neighbours had fixed on the proverbially slow-witted Bœotians.* "Surely, Æneas," he cries, apostrophising the chorus-master who superintends the performance of the Ode—"surely we shall now escape that ancient jeer—*Bœotian swine!*" Then, in two far-fetched but ingenious metaphors, he describes the functions of Æneas, who is charged with the commis-

* Themistius says: "Men called Bœotia 'a sow,' mocking the people, I suppose, for their want of culture. However, Pindar and Corinna and Hesiod were not defiled by contact with the sow."—(Orat. xxvii.) Dionysius of Halicarnassus thus enumerates the characteristics of various tribes: "An Athenian—sharp, talkative, clever; an Ionian—luxurious; a Bœotian—stupid."

sion of carrying his Ode to Syracuse and training the chorus there. First, he calls his chorus-master "a Muses' mission-staff," alluding to a Greek practice of rolling paper spirally along a stick, and then writing a despatch upon it. When the paper was unrolled, the letters on it appeared, of course, scattered in confusion over it. The receiver rolled the paper once more round a similar stick, and was thus able to read it. It formed, in fact, a rude anticipation of our "cipher-despatches." Æneas, as interpreting Pindar's inspirations to the chorus, is compared to the stick by whose help the despatch was read. For a similar reason Pindar further addresses Æneas as the "mixing-bowl," from which the wine of song is ladled out into those smaller vessels, the members of the chorus, through which at last it reaches Agesias and his friends.

Last follow praises of Syracuse and Hiero, whom he pictures as welcoming Agesias, newly returned in triumph from Stymphalus — returned "home from a home." Agesias, with his double citizenship, Syracusan and Stymphalian, recalls to Pindar the image of a vessel doubly moored at stern and prow, defying the utmost fury of the elements. And still maintaining this little allegory, he prays the deities of the ocean to bring that vessel home with joy :—

> "Grant, god of the seas, fair journey to these ;—
> And bid my songs new blooms of grace unfold!"

Diagoras of Rhodes, for whom the Seventh Olympian Ode was written, belonged to a noble, and, in older days, even a royal family in that island. Two curious

stories attest the athletic renown of his house. His son Dorieus, a famous athlete, was captured by the Athenians in a sea-fight. Greek morality did not forbid the massacring of prisoners of war, and fortunate was the captive who could escape by payment of a ransom. But the Athenians, though embittered by a long series of disasters, instantly, and without exacting a ransom, set the distinguished captive at liberty.*

We are informed also, by numerous ancient authors, that a female member of this family, a daughter apparently of Diagoras himself, named Pherenicè, ventured to transgress a law which forbade the presence of women at Olympia, through anxiety to witness the performance of her son in the lists. The boy was successful, but his mother was detected. Such an offence, according to law, should have been punished with death—the offender to be hurled headlong from a neighbouring height. But the culprit pleaded the exceptional athletic position of her family, and the plea was allowed to prevail. Permission was even added—a permission granted to no woman before or since—that Pherenicè should be admitted to witness any future Olympic festival.

Allusion has already been made to the exordium of this Ode :—

" As some wealthy lord in greeting of his daughter's spouse should lift
In his hand a brimming beaker, where the grape's bright juices foam,

* Grote, Hist. of Greece, Part II., chap. lxiv.

Passing to the youth a gift,
Erst the crown of all his riches, destined now to other home,
For the honour of his banquet, pleased his new-made son to make
Envied of each friendly feaster for his happy wedlock's sake:
So to champions crowned at Pytho and Olympia I send
Draughts of Nectar sweet, the Muses' boon, the soul's delicious fruit,
Gladdening each victor-friend!"

Pindar had now (B.C. 464) reached the climax of his fame. Even to such a hero as Diagoras he could adopt the tone of an equal, almost of a superior. Nor did the haughty Rhodians resent the poet's boasts. They engraved this Ode in golden letters on their temple of the Lindian Athenè.

Three legends follow, all connected with the mythical history of Rhodes. First we hear how Tlepolemus, fleeing from his native Tiryns in expiation of a hasty homicide, was directed by the Delphian oracle to the beautiful isle of Rhodes, the birthplace of the goddess Athenè. Next follows the tale of the settlement founded by Tlepolemus. The oracle had enjoined the perpetual offering of burnt-sacrifices to the goddess who had been born there, and to her father Zeus. But "blind oblivion" obscured the memory of this ordinance, and the altars remained unkindled. Yet the neglected deities were not alienated. Zeus rained riches on the land, and Athenè made its inhabitants matchless in the arts. A curious description follows of "figures like to things that live and move" which

filled their streets. Pindar seems to imply that these figures were actually locomotive automata. But he is careful to defend the artificers from the imputation of magical practices. Theirs was legitimate skill, marvellous indeed, yet no encroachment upon the prerogative of Deity—the right of granting life to such things only as seems good to it. Lastly, Pindar tells of a day, ere yet the gods had portioned among themselves the new-created earth,—a day when not as yet

"Towered the Rhodian isle conspicuous over Ocean's waves, but still
Deep it lay beneath the whelming brine."

One deity alone was accidentally absent from the allotment. It was the Sun-god Helios:—

"None was there to claim a portion for the absent God of Light.
Him, the pure and holy one, they left disfranchised of his lot."

The oversight was unintended, and Zeus would have cast the lots again. But the Sun-god declined the offer. He saw, he said, a land rising from the depths of ocean—

"Rich in sustenance for man and plenteous pasturage for sheep."

And then, addressing the Goddess of Fate who presided over the allotment, he invoked her to lift her hands and swear that, when such country appeared, it should be assigned to him. The promise was given,

and Rhodes appeared from the waters—the portion of Helios.

With the island appeared also its tutelary nymph, Rhodos (*i.e.*, the Rose). Readers may remember some years ago in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy a beautiful picture* in illustration of the tale—the emerging island, the nymph surrounded with the flowers from which her name was taken, the Sun-god descending to claim his bride.

From the union of Helios and Rhodos sprang, says Pindar, seven noble sons. And to three of these sons he traces the three independent communities which in his own day occupied the island, the cities of Lindus, Ialysus, and Camirus.

A dazzling enumeration of Diagoras's victories closes the Ode. Olympia and Pytho had been already mentioned as scenes of his triumph; now we hear of prizes brought by him from the Isthmus, Nemea, Argos, Athens, Arcadia, Thebes, Pellene, Ægina, Megara—a marvellous list indeed. Yet the poet adds a word of caution; he dares not finish with a boast. Let Diagoras remain true to his inherited principles, a loyal, law-abiding citizen. Thus he may hope to avoid the special dangers of success, the fatal pride which too often intoxicates the victor, and alienates his countrymen. All is well with him now. May it but remain so!—

"For now the state holds festival,
With the Eratids rejoicing: yet full oft in shortest space
Veers with sudden sweep the fickle gale!"

* Helios and Rhodos, by Sir F. Leighton, *P.* R.A.

It is to be hoped that Diagoras was wise enough to profit by the poet's warning. We find in the history of Greece enough gloomy records of aristocratic lawlessness, and fierce reprisals on the part of the oppressed classes when at last the crash came, to assure us that such warnings were often needed.

CHAPTER IX.

CYRENE.

One of the most famous and flourishing of Greek settlements in distant lands was Cyrenè, on the northern coast of Africa. It occupied a site of rare beauty and fertility, a succession of natural terraces, culminating in a high and spacious table-land, and projecting with a bold curve northwards into the Mediterranean. Thus its position at once gave it the full benefit of the cool sea-breezes, and screened it effectually from the hot and unwholesome winds of the deserts in the interior. The region abounded in streams running down through deep and sheltered gorges to the sea. Both slopes and gorges were clothed in the richest vegetation, and the various elevations of the different ridges produced such differences of climate, that the successive harvests in different parts of the region lasted no less than eight months of the year. Among the many rare and valuable products of Cyrenè, the most important was a plant called Silphium, indigenous to the country, and apparently peculiar to it, whose stalk, root, and

juices were highly esteemed all over Greece, and employed largely both as food and as medicine. The monopoly of this valuable plant, coupled with the other choice products of the place, made Cyrenè one of the wealthiest cities in the Grecian world. Splendid buildings, whose ruins may yet be traced, rose around the "fountain of Apollo." The beautiful parks of the Cyrenaic merchant-princes gained for the place the title of "the garden of Aphroditè."* Horse-breeding, the invariable accompaniment (as we have seen) of prosperity in a Greek state, was carried on largely by the great families; and in spite of the cost and difficulty of conveying racers and chariots from Africa to Greece, the Greeks of Libya were not unfrequently represented in the great equestrian competitions of the mother country, and especially in those at Delphi, whose oracle was believed to have originally enjoined the foundation of the Cyrenaic colony. Other forms of athleticism also flourished at Cyrenè, and boxers and racers from that city won many prizes in the great Greek games. Ælian has an amusing anecdote of a Cyrenaic boxer, whose teeth were loosened by an unlucky blow of his antagonist. But the champion was not discouraged by this misadventure; he swallowed his teeth, continued the contest, and was victorious! †

Three of Pindar's Pythian Odes—the fourth, the fifth, and the ninth—commemorate victories of Cyrenaic competitors at Delphi, and embody ancient legends of Cyrenè, and of its ruling family, the "Bat-

* Pyth. v. 24. † Æl. Var. Hist. x. 19.

tiadæ." The town was believed to derive its name from Cyrenè, a Thessalian nymph beloved of Apollo, who had been conveyed by her lover to Libya, and established there as queen of the continent of Africa, "the third part of Earth's expanse." But this tale of the origin of Cyrenè seems wholly unconnected, and, indeed, inconsistent with another, which tells how the country was originally peopled by Dorian immigrants from the island of Thera in the Ægean Sea, under the leadership of one Battus, whose descendants, named alternately Battus and Arcesilas, had ever since handed down the sovereignty of the colony from father to son in unbroken succession.

The name "Battus" signifies in Greek a "stammerer;" and it was said that the original founder of the colony had suffered from some impediment to speech, that he had consulted the Delphian oracle in hopes of a cure, and had been directed by the god to proceed to Libya, a country at that time hardly known to the most adventurous mariners of Greece. He obeyed the direction, and his faith was rewarded by a miracle. A lion met him in the deserts, and the sudden fright broke the string of his tongue. Thenceforth he spoke plain. According to this legend, then, the foundation of Cyrenè took place under the auspices of the Delphian oracle, and the Delphian god Apollo was supposed to view with especial favour the prosperity of the city, and the athletic and other distinctions of its citizens. Apollo was always considered as the chief patron-deity of Cyrenè. His temple occupied a conspicuous site in the town; processions in

his honour were for ever passing through its streets;* and the fountain in its midst was known as "the fountain of Apollo." This connection between Apollo and the distant Cyrenè naturally produced legends which should explain it. One such legend was that of Battus and his visit to Delphi; another was the tale already mentioned of the loves of Apollo and the nymph Cyrenè.

But there was a third local legend, unconnected with the name of Apollo, and carrying us back into a more remote antiquity,—a time prior to the origin of the Delphian temple. Jason and his Argonauts had passed, it was said, over the deserts of Libya. Their ship had been miraculously drawn for twelve days across the sands by Medea's magic spells, and they had at last reached the fountains of the lake Tritonis. Here they were greeted by a local deity, a son of Poseidon, who presented to one of the crew—the Lacedæmonian hero Euphemus—a clod of earth, telling him to treasure it, and convey it to his home. Had he done so, his descendants in the fourth generation would have obtained the sovereignty of Libya. But through some negligence on the part of Euphemus's followers the symbolic clod was allowed to fall overboard, and was carried by the tide to Thera. In consequence the descendants of Euphemus were not allowed to enter on their sovereignty in Africa till they had first colonised Thera; and thus it was from Thera instead of Laconia, and in the seventeenth instead of the fourth generation, that Battus, the

* Pyth. v. 90.

descendant of Euphemus, at last led his colonists to Cyrenè.

The first of these three legends—the loves of Apollo and the nymph Cyrenè—is charmingly told in the Ninth Pythian Ode. This poem is addressed to Telesicrates of Cyrenè, winner in the race of footmen in full armour.

Cyrenè, says the poet, was the daughter of Hypseus, a divinely-descended king of the Thessalian Lapithæ. He describes her as a heroine of Amazonian tastes and habits, such as Virgil afterwards portrayed in his famous description of Camilla,*—a mighty huntress, scorning the dull home-life of an ordinary Grecian maiden :—

"Small joy she found to guide the shuttle's tortuous round,
Or share the feasts, her home-pent mates that cheered.
But brazen javelins she threw,
And savage beasts with brandished falchion slew,
Making in restful peace to dwell
The cattle of her sire, and yielding scanty space
To Slumber's sweet embrace,
When on her weary eyes at dawn he fell."

Apollo saw her on her native mountains—

"As unarmed, unaided, she defied
And grappled fearless a lion fierce."

He consulted the wise old Centaur Chiron, and bore the nymph away to Libya's "golden halls," where she became his bride, and the mother of a heavenly progeny. And there, says Pindar, she reigns yet, and

* .En. vii. 805.

shares the triumph which Telesicrates has brought to her city.

The introduction of this legend has a special appropriateness in this particular ode, if we may believe the statement of the commentators, that Telesicrates was about to bring home to Cyrene a bride from the mother country. And certainly the general colour and contents of the Ode make this supposition extremely probable. One chief idea seems to run through it all, the blessings of a lawful and prosperous love. Telesicrates is described as a beautiful and stately hero, an ideal bridegroom :—

"Full oft upon his victories
At Pallas' yearly feasts hath gazed each wondering maid,
And silently hath prayed
For spouse or son like Telesicrates."

The dialogue between Apollo and the Centaur dwells with infinite grace and tenderness on the inseparable connection between a pure love and modest reserve and delicacy. And in the conclusion of the Ode Telesicrates is reminded of another tale of happy love in the annals of his own family, how his ancestor Alexidamus had wooed and won a daughter of the Libyan Antæus, king of Irasa :—

"Whom many a kinsman lord of high degree,
And many a stranger sought, for fair of form was she.
And afire were all to bear away
Her golden-coronalled youth's fair fruit,
But her father had purposed a nobler suit."

Antæus had heard the old tale of Danaus, who bade

his daughters' suitors assemble in the Stadium of Argos, and race for their brides. This precedent he determined himself to follow :—

" His daughter's spouse the Libyan found
E'en thus. In rich array her place hard by the goal she took, the race
To guerdon ; and her sire proclaimed around,
Who clasped her first, should claim the prize.
Swift o'er the course Alexidamus flies,
And seized her hand in his, and bore
His bride through nomad hosts of horsemen, raining down
Full many a leaf and crown,
And many a triumph-plume was his before."

We pass now to consider the Fourth and Fifth Pythian Odes, which were both composed in honour of a single occasion, the victory gained at Delphi in the chariot-race by Arcesilas, king of Cyrenè. The victor was not himself present to witness his triumph, but was represented by his kinsman Carrhotus, who drove the successful chariot, and who probably commissioned Pindar to produce an Ode for performance at Cyrenè, at a festival which followed on his return thither. This Ode was the Fifth Pythian ; the fourth, as we shall see, was composed afterwards for a special purpose. Yet it is not unlikely that both Odes reached Arcesilas together, and were conveyed in the ship which brought Carrhotus home.

The Fifth Pythian opens with a lofty panegyric upon the power of wealth well used, and on the magnificent position of Arcesilas, at once a mighty monarch

and a victor at Pytho. The king is admonished never to forget how much of this glory he owes to two constant friends, the one a god, the other a mortal, Apollo and Carrhotus. Pindar dwells at considerable length on the skill and nerve exhibited by Carrhotus. The race had been singularly disastrous to the mass of competitors. No less than forty cars had been upset; the confusion and danger must have been indescribable. Yet Carrhotus had steered his chariot through the writhing mass of cars and horses, without so much as grazing a wheel or snapping a trace, and had reached the winning-post in triumph.

> "With calm strong purpose pressing on
> 'Mid forty fallen guiders of the rein,
> Secure through all did he his chariot guide,
> And from the games returned hath reached his home on
> Libya's plain."

Then follows a brief allusion to the legend of Battus, and to the rise of Cyrenè under the continual favour and protection of Apollo, to whom Arcesilas is taught to refer not only the material prosperity of his country, but all the enlightened and artistic civilisation which surrounds him, and the noble strains of minstrelsy which are the reward of his victory. The origin of the Carneian festival of Apollo at Cyrenè, the occasion on which the Ode was to be performed, is traced back to Thera, and thence to the Ægids of Sparta, with which illustrious house Pindar boasts a connection of his own family. Then returning to the subject of Battus, the poet describes the actual foundation of the

city Cyrenè, the growth of its splendid temples, the paving of the sacred road along which the festal procession mounts still to Apollo's sanctuary, and lastly, the tomb of the heroic founder, rising in solitary grandeur "behind the mart" of the city. Elsewhere are other tombs, each enshrining the remains of a Battiad monarch, and all these dead ancestors of Arcesilas share, "as far as dead men may," in the triumph of their descendant:—

"Apart—the tomb their portion—others rest,
Great kings, before
The palace, their achievements high
Besprinkled all with dews of song
Soft streaming from the festal throng.
These, lapt in earth, the tale of bliss partake,
And share their kinsman's well-won victory;
Who now youth's song to Phœbus of the golden lyre
must wake."

The Ode closes with a high encomium on the personal virtues of Arcesilas, and with a prayer for his continued good fortune. He is wise and eloquent beyond his years; bold as an eagle, strong as a fortress, cultured and skilful, a worthy subject of Apollo's favour. Pindar's language, however, seems to imply that he had formed this high opinion of Arcesilas rather on hearsay than on actual personal knowledge. It is improbable that Arcesilas had ever visited Greece; and it is at least questionable, in spite of the assertions of ancient commentators, whether Pindar had ever visited Cyrenè. Highly encomiastic as the Ode is, its compliments are of a somewhat vague and impersonal

character. Pindar addresses Arcesilas rather as the ideal king than as a beloved and well-known patron. We find in his language no traces of such an intimacy as undoubtedly existed between the poet and the kings of Syracuse and Agrigentum. Pindar's praises of Arcesilas were probably sincere: Carrhotus, the friend and kinsman of the young king, had doubtless drawn his picture in flattering colours. Yet, a few years later, we find the gross misrule of this very Arcesilas leading to his own ruin, and the final overthrow of the Battiad dynasty in Cyrenè.

The Fourth Pythian Ode is probably the very finest of all Pindar's extant works. It is by far his longest poem; indeed it is more than twice as long as any other Ode, and it exhibits from first to last, both in its plan and its execution, the most consummate skill of the poet. Pindar had a special reason for the elaborate care which he bestowed on the composition of this Ode, and it was a reason which did him honour. The poem was designed to serve a friend in need—to save him from the miseries of exile, and to recover for him the favour of his offended king.

Damophilus, a noble of Cyrenè and a member of the royal house, had for some unknown reason incurred the resentment of Arcesilas, and had been forced to flee his country. He took refuge, it would seem, in Thebes, and there formed a friendship with Pindar, whose pride in his own descent from the mythical house of Ægeus would doubtless make him ready to acknowledge a kinsman in the Ægid Damophilus. The exile had apparently long resigned all hope of

restoration to his native town, when the victory of Arcesilas suddenly opened to him a possibility—a bare possibility, it was true, but still a possibility—of a change in his fortunes. Pindar had been commissioned to address Arcesilas in a triumphal Ode. Might not the poet be induced to seize this favourable opportunity of saying a word in season on behalf of his unhappy friend? This hint of Damophilus's hopes was not lost on the generous Pindar, and its result was the composition of the Fourth Pythian Ode.

The rhetorical skill and tact exhibited by Pindar in pleading the cause of his friend would have done credit to the most accomplished professional advocate. The whole Ode is a connected argument of the most powerful and convincing character; yet it is not till the conclusion is reached, that it is perceived to be an argument at all. It opens with magnificent compliments to Arcesilas and Cyrenè; it proceeds to set forth in the most vivid and picturesque form a series of heroic legends recalling all the proudest memories of the house of Battus; it sketches a noble ideal of the true hero-king, and finds in Arcesilas the realisation of that ideal, the physician of his state, the restorer of times which are out of joint, the creator of that civil order which a fool can disturb, but which a wise man only can bring into being. Yet all the while, surely but secretly, in every compliment, in every myth, in every maxim, the poet is gradually paving the way towards his final conclusion,—that gentleness and not force is the true secret of greatness; that the ties of kinship should prevail over the memory of past quarrels; and

that the pardon and restoration of his erring but repentant kinsman would be the crown and consummation of the glorious career of Arcesilas, and a fitting continuation to the generous traditions of his heroic house. Perhaps the best parallel which modern literature presents to the scheme of this Ode is the famous speech of Mark Antony in Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar." The reader will remember with what infinite tact in that incomparable speech the orator prepares imperceptibly the minds of his hearers for the conclusion to which he desires to lead them, but which he does not venture to present to them till they are ready to receive it. Nay, the ultimate determination of the audience to avenge the death of Cæsar seems to come from themselves, rather than from the orator. So it is with this Ode. Pindar does not, even at the last, ask in plain terms for the pardon of Damophilus. He urges it, indirectly alone, by allegory and maxim; and finally he draws two pictures, exhibiting with incomparable force and pathos on the one hand the miseries of banishment, on the other the happy, tranquil, law-abiding life of the returned exile, repentant and forgiven. And he leaves it to the promptings of Arcesilas's own generous heart to convert this last picture into a glorious reality, to gladden Damophilus, and to bring honour upon himself.

The argument of the Ode falls naturally into three divisions; and these divisions, as has been pointed out by a German critic,* stand to each other precisely as the three members of a syllogism. First comes the

* Leop. Schmidt, Pindar's Leben u. Dichtung, p. 288.

legend of the early prophecies, which foretold the rise of the Cyrenaic kingdom, and of the mystic clod presented by the local deity to the Argonaut Euphemus. This legend embodies the first premiss of Pindar's syllogism. The rule of the Euphemids in Cyrenè is no usurped and brutal tyranny, but a legitimate and law-abiding sovereignty, sanctioned and ordained by Heaven. Next we have the myth of Jason, the central idea of which furnishes the poet with his second premiss—that true kingship exhibits itself not in violence, but in a certain winning grace and gentleness, which secure to the true-born ruler influence over his fellow-men and favour from the gods. Last comes the conclusion, enforced by easy allegory and indirect suggestion, but nowhere nakedly stated, that Arcesilas, the representative of the Euphemid monarchy, can afford to disdain the harsh methods of proscription and cruelty, by which a vulgar tyrant is forced to maintain his power.

The substance of the legend which occupies the first of these three divisions, the myth of Euphemus and the clod which symbolised his sovereignty, has been already given: and we may now pass to the second division—the story of Jason.

Jason's father Æson had been forcibly deprived of the sovereignty of the Thessalian town Iolcos by his crafty kinsman Pelias. Jason himself was only saved from death by the interposition of friends, who conveyed the child secretly to the cave of the Centaur Chiron. There he was trained in all heroic exercises, and thence on reaching manhood he returned to claim

his kingdom. On the way, in crossing a torrent, he accidentally lost a sandal. Pelias had been warned by an oracle "to beware of the One-sandalled Man," and now the mysterious warning was to be fulfilled. Suddenly the youthful hero appeared in the market-place of his native town. His aspect is thus described by the poet:—

"A hero dread, twin spears he bore, and twinfold guise of raiment wore,
For aptly to his wondrous limbs clove garb of Magnete clime,
Nor rains might pierce the pard-skin round him spread,
Nor his bright locks unshorn their bloom had shed,
But mantled round his shoulders broad! Swift to the market-place he strode,
And, testing all his dauntless mettle, stood
'Mid the gathering multitude."

The crowds gazed in wonder on such an apparition. Who could he be? Not Phœbus, surely, nor Ares. Was he some giant of old—Otus, Ephialtes, Tityus? Nay, they had perished long since. The mystery baffled all their surmises.

Suddenly, in hot haste, Pelias himself drove down from his palace—

"—Then spied, and shuddering knew too well what *single sandal* bound
The youth's right foot."

However, he dissembled his fear, and in a tone of assumed mockery inquired the lineage of the illus-

trious stranger. Jason answered courteously and simply; and then, turning from the king, inquired of the citizens where his father dwelt:—

"Trained in old Chiron's school I come, whose daughters
in their cavern-home,
Philyra and Chariclo—spotless maids!—my childhood
bred.
Now twice ten years fulfilled, nor tongue nor hand
Offending e'er, I seek my native land
To win the realm, where ruled of old my sire, —now
passed to alien hold
Unrighteously, for there did Zeus ordain
Æolus and his sons should reign.
Well I wot hath Pelias, led by jaundiced greed astray,
Torn from my sire perforce the land of his ancient sway.
And me; when light dawned on my opening eyes,
My parents mourning made for dread of that fierce lord,
and feigned me dead,
And so, 'mid funeral gloom, and women's cries,
Swathed me in purple bands, and darkling bare
At midnight from my home, to dwell 'neath Chiron's
fostering care.
Thus hear ye briefly gathered all my rede;
And show me now, good townsmen mine, the cradle of
my knightly line,
For sure no alien land is this to Æson's native seed!
Jason am I, the Centaur gave my name."

One would have expected that such a declaration would have sealed his death-warrant; but no—whatever Pelias felt, he concealed his resentment, and the youth reached his home unmolested—

"—He spake: and to his aged father came,
Nor came unknown,—to greet the boy, those time-worn
eyes plashed tears of joy,
For glad at heart was he, his son to find
Choicest bloom of humankind."

Five days were spent in feasting with his kinsmen, who flocked in from all sides to greet the returned prince. Then on the sixth day he revealed his purpose, and the assembled company sprang from their seats, and escorted Jason to the palace of Pelias.

The interview which followed between the usurper and the youthful claimant to the throne is described in one of the most dramatic passages in all Pindar. Instead of loud invective and rude recrimination, we find exhibited on both sides a perfect courtesy of language; coupled, however, on the part of Jason, with a fearless assertion of his just rights, and on that of Pelias with a crafty dissimulation, in which vague promises and concessions were dexterously nullified by conditions involving, as he hoped, the speedy destruction of his rival. The kingdom should be restored, but Jason must first undertake an enterprise, which was demanded by the duty of the family to its dead ancestor, Phrixus; he must recover from Æëtes, king of the distant Colchos, the Golden Fleece of the ram which had conveyed Phrixus over the Hellespont.

Then follows, in Pindar's most rapid and vigorous style, a sketch of Jason's famous Quest of the Fleece—the voyage of the Argo. The story is not told in detail after the fashion of an epic poem. It is presented

rather in a series of *tableaux*, each designed to bring out Pindar's conception of Jason as the ideal king, attaching men's minds to himself by the magical force of his innate royalty, "strong without rage," gentle, but irresistible. He draws the noblest heroes of Greece to join his expedition. They come, constrained, as it were, by a magic spell:—

"None might endure
To chew eld's cud, and lonely bide in safety at his mother's side!"

The very powers of nature minister to the young hero. The thunder roars approval as he quits the port; favouring winds bear him to the "inhospitable Euxine's mouth;" the clashing rocks, that stood as sentinels to destroy all entering ships, thenceforth remain fixed and harmless for ever. He reaches Colchos, and Medea, the weird daughter of Æëtes, succumbs to the same irresistible charm which everywhere attends the hero's progress.

Æëtes consented to restore the golden fleece, but, like Pelias, he coupled his consent with hard conditions. Jason must first yoke a team of magic fire-breathing bulls, and force them to plough a field. The king believed that the attempt to fulfil this condition would at once rid him of his unwelcome guest, but he knew not that his daughter's magic had made the guest invulnerable:—

"Then his plough of adamant Æëtes midst them sets,
While from his bulls the flames burst panting in yellow jets,

And, rending earth, their brazen hoofs rebound.
Yet these he yoked, with none to aid, and straight the
shapely furrows made,
And scored a fathom deep the loamy ground,
Then spake,—'This work accomplished, let the king
That rules yon barque win from me that immortal covering,
His be the fleece tasselled with gleaming gold.'

He spake, and Jason laid aside his saffron vest, and,
fortified
With trust in Heaven, his task began: nor feared the
flames, made bold
By his weird hostess' hest. The plough he grasped,
Round the bulls' necks constraining fetters clasped,
Smote with fierce goad each massy frame, and to his hard
task's ending came!
In speechless pain, yet groaning as amazed,
On his might Æëtes gazed."

But a new danger still awaited Jason. The fleece was guarded by a monstrous serpent, huge as the keel of a fifty-oared galley,

"Shaped amid the crash of steel."

Pindar hurries over this and the remaining points of the legend at a bound. "Time draws close," he cries—"I must hasten on. I know of a shorter path, and cannot linger on the beaten track!" The serpent was slain, he tells us, "by guile," and forthwith he conducts Jason on his homeward voyage, lingering for a moment to tell how the Argonauts touched at Lemnos, and how there their comrade Euphemus became parent of the princely race that now rules Cyrenè. To that race, he says, Apollo has promised

a kingdom without end,—and the title on which that kingdom rests is the wisdom and virtue of its possessors.

Thus closes the second division of the Ode, and now Pindar begins to point his moral. He addresses Arcesilas with an allegory, designed to show the vanity of attempting to crush a noble foe by severity. Oppression and misery can never destroy true greatness; the noble oak may be hewn to serve ignoble uses, or even burnt as firewood on the hearth, but it will still assert its inborn worth, still prove itself superior to all meaner timbers:—

"E'en in decay it testifies its worth,
Whether in flames it end on winter's hearth,
Or, matched with comrade pillars tall, it prop a lordly palace wall,
Painfully doomed in alien homes to toil,
Banished from its native soil."

From this simple parable Pindar passes to exhortation. Let Arcesilas act the true king's part, to heal and not to widen the gaping wounds of his kingdom! Feeble hands can shake a nation's peace, but hard it is to restore the tottering fabric of civil order. A famous English writer has expressed the same idea in words which strikingly recall the language of the Theban poet:—

"How easy it is to shed human blood! how much in all ages have wounds and shrieks and tears been the cheap and vulgar resources of the rulers of mankind! how difficult and how noble it is to govern in kindness, and to found an empire upon the everlasting basis of justice and affection! . . . To let loose hussars and to bring

up artillery—to govern with lighted matches, and to cut, and push, and prime,—I call this, not vigour, but *the sloth of cruelty and ignorance.* The vigour I love consists in finding out wherein subjects are aggrieved, in relieving them; . . . in the laborious, watchful, and difficult task of increasing public happiness by allaying each particular discontent." *

And then, at last, the poet ventures to introduce the name of Damophilus. He dilates upon his worth and his misfortunes—struggling, like Atlas, under the burden of a world of woes. Yet even the old foes of Zeus, the Titans, were at last forgiven by the god who had overthrown them. May not Damophilus hope for a like grace from Arcesilas?—

"Yet he prays, when to the dregs is drained his cup of ill,
Home to return once more, and oft by Apollo's rill
Give all his soul to joy;—there, 'mid the throng
Poetic of his townsmen, bear the carven lyre, their quiet share,
And never more or do or suffer wrong!"

And—adds the poet in conclusion—should this blissful vision ever be realised, the gratitude of Damophilus will for ever keep alive the memory of the victory of Arcesilas, and of the noble stream of Theban song which commemorated that victory, and restored the exile to his home.

One would fain hope that this splendid poem secured its generous object. But on this point history is silent. We only know that the warnings of the

* Sydney Smith—Letters of Peter Plymley, Letter ix.

poet did not avail to teach Arcesilas those lessons of prudence and moderation in dealing with the political troubles of Cyrenè, which might have been the salvation of the dynasty. Arcesilas perished; Battus, his son, died in exile; and Cyrenè became a republic.

CHAPTER X.

THEBES.—ÆGINA.

FOUR of Pindar's extant Odes are addressed to victors from his own native city, Thebes. These are, the Eleventh Pythian, and three out of the seven Isthmians — the first, the third, and the sixth. All, as might be expected, abound in indications of Pindar's deep attachment to his native city, and the interest which he felt in all events, at home or abroad, in which her weal was concerned. Yet, for several reasons, the frequent political allusions which these Odes contain tend rather to perplex than to enlighten us as to Theban politics in Pindar's age, and the part, if any, which the poet took in them. It so happens that we are unable to fix, with anything like certainty, the date of any one of these four Odes. It is not surprising, then, that commentators who have endeavoured to identify the events to which they seem to allude with historical occurrences known to us from other sources, should have come to widely different conclusions. Again, our existing evidences as to Theban affairs at this period are at once defective, and in many points mutually contradictory. And, for

obvious reasons, we cannot expect to find Pindar expressing himself fully and unreservedly on burning questions of contemporary politics. His allusions are necessarily guarded, and therefore frequently obscure. Still, amid all this obscurity, a few facts seem to emerge, which throw light on Theban history and on the political views of the poet.

One such fact is the existence, in Pindar's days, of a long and bitter struggle between contending factions at Thebes—a struggle which Pindar regrets, and would fain appease. We obtain frequent glimpses of the misfortunes which the overweening pride and ambition of a portion of the Theban aristocracy drew down upon themselves and their country. We hear of banishments, of great houses suffering a temporary eclipse of their greatness, of savage feuds, and apparently—in dark and mysterious hints *—of fratricidal murders, and stern reprisals on their authors. Of the selfish ambitions which produced these disastrous consequences the poet speaks with regret and with implicit condemnation; yet he never exults over their defeat. He admires and loves the illustrious Theban aristocracy; and though he deplores its faults, he feels the deepest pity for its misfortunes. He appears to seek a remedy for the evils of the time, not in the expulsion from the State of the members who had disturbed its peace, but in the general diffusion through the community (and especially the upper classes) of a tranquil, law-abiding spirit. In the

* So Boeckh explains the mythological matter of the Eleventh Pythian.

Eleventh Pythian he contrasts the solid advantages of "the modest mean," of peaceful unassuming citizenship with the treacherous enticements of "the tyrant's lot." And in the opening of the Third Isthmian he finds his highest type of political virtue in the noble who can rise superior to the temptations of his position :—

"If crowned with high success in glorious game,
Or with rich store of plenty blest,
Man yet can curb within his breast
The demon Pride. Oh, let his name
Sound proudly in his townsmen's high acclaim."—(S.)

The ideal of life, which he suggests to his hearers, and which he would fain realise in his own case, is to dwell—honoured and beloved—among fellow-citizens, in dignified but unassuming ease, and to die in peace, bequeathing an unsullied name to a posterity who should reflect in their own lives the virtues of their parent. Thus it was, he says, that the heroes of old, Iolaus, Castor, Polydeuces, won their title to divine honours,* and such is the lot in the hope of which he can look tranquilly forward to his own approaching end :—

"Now, thanks to Neptune! whose kind sway
Cheers with calm our clouded day.
Now will I bind my brow with wreaths, and sing.
Kind Heaven, no cloud of trouble fling
In wrath athwart my new-recovered peace!
So may I wait Death's calm release,
Wearing out my aged years
Until the destined day appears."†—(S.)

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* Pyth. ix. 59. † Isthm. vi. 37.

Of those whom a neglect of the principles which Pindar would instil into his townsmen had involved in faction and deserved calamity, he speaks not with anger but with sympathy. He pities their reverses, rejoices in any gleam of returning prosperity, and finds in their sad experiences lessons both of consolation and of warning. Thus he alludes to a member of a noble house who had so far compromised himself in the strife of parties as to be driven to flee his city and seek a new home in the neighbouring Orchomenus: *—

"On him, in storms of civil tumult wild
Shipwrecked, by every furious billow tossed,
Her bruised and battered child,
Orchomenus—a friendly host—
From the deep sea a willing welcome smiled.
Now hath his inborn fate
Lifted again his fall'n and sad estate,
And hard experience taught his soul to learn
The lore of prudent thought, her lesson sage and stern."—
(S.)

Domestic feuds and the calamities of individuals were not the only evils brought upon Thebes by the factions which disturbed her commonwealth. Through them, also, the city found itself committed to a foreign policy disgraceful in itself and disastrous in its consequences. At that momentous period, when the rapid advance of Persian invasion summoned all patriotic Greeks to rally in defence of their common fatherland, the selfish and scheming oligarchy who were for the time supreme in Thebes flung themselves

* Isthm. i. 36.

and their city into the arms of the invader. We learn from Thucydides that this ignoble course was deeply distasteful to a considerable section of the citizens; and we find in Pindar's poems much which leads us to suspect that he shared in this matter the sentiments of the opposition. But the conciliatory attitude which he adopts towards the jarring factions of his countrymen rarely allows him so much as to hint at this unwelcome and dangerous topic. The failure of Xerxes naturally brought about the destruction of his Theban partisans; but the punishment of the actual criminals did not free the city from the discredit in which they had involved it. Athens especially never forgave the defection which had wellnigh involved her in hopeless ruin. She bent all her energies to humiliate her faithless neighbour; she stirred the subject cities of Bœotia to revolt; and ultimately she shook the influence of the city to its foundations in the campaign which swept away the flower of the Theban nobility in the disastrous battle of Œnophyta.

It has been thought that Pindar alludes to this battle in the Sixth Isthmian, addressed to Strepsiades of Thebes, an uncle of whom, the poet tells us, had fallen on the field of battle in defence of his native town :—

> "Son of Diodotus, 'twas thine . . .
> For Thebes to yield thy young life's flowery pride.
> Amid the bravest to the front he flew,
> Where foemen pressed and hopes were few.
> There the fatal blow was dealt.
> Ah me! the speechless woe I felt."—(S.)

At the great battle of Platæa, where the retiring Persians made their final effort to crush the forces of Greece, the Theban oligarchs had been found fighting, with bravery worthy of a better cause, in the ranks of the invaders. A reference to this struggle has been suspected in the Third Isthmian:—

"But on their home in wrath the tempest leapt,
And from their hearth four hero-brethren swept."—(S.)

If the suspicion be correct, we may see in Pindar's language an illustration of the caution and tact with which he handles a perilous theme. The fall of the Theban oligarchs, fighting for their country's foes, is treated rather as an inevitable calamity than as the just penalty of their criminal schemes. The poet gazes on it with awe and pity. No word of reproach escapes his lips. He cannot defend the cause in which the warriors fell; but he buries their fault in silence.

Amid the clouds and gloom which hung over Thebes, the result of her disgraceful union with the enemies of Greece, one ray of light appears to console the patriotic poet. He dwells with eagerness on the sympathy, resting partly on national traditions, partly on community of interests, and not least, perhaps, on common fear and dislike of Athens, which, after the Persian troubles, grew up between Thebes and Sparta. He seems to have looked upon this friendship as offering to Thebes her best hope of recovering the position which she had lost. And it is probable that those mythical traditions of his own family, which were so constantly present to his fancy, gave him an additional

bias towards Sparta,—the state, with whose early fortunes the legends of his own ancestors, the Ægids, were so intimately associated. The sympathy, which he hails, and longs to strengthen, between Thebes and Sparta, is shadowed forth in his description of the legendary brotherhood-in-arms between the Spartan Castor and the Theban Iolaus. He describes their friendly rivalry in feats of strength, and represents them as standing out side by side in proud pre-eminence above the other champions of Greece, each the charioteer of a demigod, each victorious in all athletic contests:—

"Numberless they bound
With conquering wreaths their temples round.
This,—my own native Dirce's boast of pride:
That,—the heroic chief from famed Eurotas' side."—(S.)

This description occurs in the First Isthmian. Similarly, and doubtless for the same reason, these heroes are associated together in the Eleventh Pythian—

"To greatness Iolaus grew, and Castor strong."

In the Sixth Isthmian, he enumerates among the legendary glories of Thebes, the assistance furnished by the Ægids to the founders of the Spartan kingdom. But, when this Ode was written, a cloud of disappointment seems to have overshadowed the bright hopes which he had once formed from the prospect of Spartan friendship. He hints that Sparta has forgotten the old claims of Thebes upon her love—

"But ah! the grace of days of yore
Falleth on sleep, and none remembereth more."—(S.)

In fact the Spartans proved but lukewarm friends to Thebes. Hearty support from Sparta might have averted the bitter humiliation of Œnophyta; but that support was withheld, and the Thebans found too late that they had leaned upon a broken reed.

The mythical glories of Thebes were out of all proportion to the importance of the city in later history. They carry us back into times before the Dorians had established themselves in Sparta, when Athens was not yet a city. Thebes and Argos were then the foremost powers in Greece; and the struggles between these two cities occupy in the earlier period of Greek mythology the same prominence which in the later period belongs to the Trojan war. The opening verses of the Sixth Isthmian contain a long list of the heroic memories of ancient Thebes, the birth-place of Heracles the greatest of all Greek heroes, of Dionysus the god of wine, of Tiresias the father of Grecian seership, of Iolaus—a favourite hero of Pindar's—the nephew and comrade of Heracles. There too we find mention of the "Sparti," the warrior-race who sprang from the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, first founder of the city, and from whom sundry Theban families in Pindar's own day claimed descent. The closing scene of the Argive war, the repulse of Adrastus from before the walls of Thebes, is not forgotten: and the list closes with the legend of Pindar's own ancestors, the Ægids, who helped to found the Dorian sovereignty in Sparta.

References to this series of legends abound in our poet, but they are by no means confined to the Odes addressed to Theban conquerors. Indeed, in these latter

Odes, the element of local mythology, though never wanting, is on the whole less prominent than might have been expected, and takes the form of allusion rather than of narrative. The most important legendary episode which we find in them—that of Agamemnon's murder, and the revenge of Orestes on the assassins, in the Eleventh Pythian—is, in the form in which Pindar tells it, a Laconian legend, and has no connection with the mythology of Thebes. Possibly the contemporary troubles of his city may have to some extent distracted the attention of the poet from its past glories. Or he may have deemed these themes so familiar to his hearers, as to be sufficiently recalled to their memories by passing allusions. Whatever be the reason, it is certain that the chief passages in which Pindar dwells on Theban legends are to be found in Odes addressed to a foreign and not to a native audience.*

We have seen how eagerly the poet looked to Sparta, as the ally whose support was to save his unhappy city amid its troubles, present and to come. But there was another Grecian state towards which he seems to have been drawn by a yet stronger sympathy. His attachment to the island-community of Ægina was both personal and national. He was associated with many of its citizens by the ties of warm private friendship, strengthened, it would seem, by frequent and familiar intercourse. The memory of a fancied kinship had, even in historical times, united Thebes and Ægina

* *E.g.* Nem. i. and ix. Ol. ii. and vi. all addressed to Sicilian victors. The legends of Heracles often appear in Odes addressed to Æginetans—*e.g.* Nem. iii. Isthm. v.

more than once in close political alliance. And, in Pindar's favourite legends, members of the heroic Æginetan house of Æacus appeared, again and again, as the chosen friends and comrades of the Theban Heracles.

No less than eleven of Pindar's extant Odes* are addressed to Æginetan conquerors. In many of these he expresses what is evidently a warm and sincere admiration for the character of the people and their institutions; and his language as to the families of the victors often indicates the closest intimacy and friendship between himself and them.

The island of Ægina lies in the middle of the Saronic gulf, between the two great promontories of Attica and Argolis. It will be remembered that the Nemean festival was held in the latter district, and a large proportion of the Æginetan victories recorded by Pindar were obtained in the lists of Nemea. Ægina was a most conspicuous object in the view from Athens over the Saronic gulf; and it was in allusion to this, and to the long-standing jealousies which existed between the two states, that Pericles called Ægina "the eyesore of the Piræus." The natural features of the island were not specially attractive. It was somewhat bare and rocky. Such beauty as it possessed was due to the luminous clearness of its air, and the bold outlines of the mountain which formed its centre. But its buildings in Pindar's day were among the most magnificent in Greece; its harbour was filled with stately ships;

* These are—Ol. viii. Pyth. viii. Nem. iii. iv. v. vi. vii. viii. Isthm. iv. v. vii.

and its quays, swarming with foreign traders and loaded with bales of costly merchandise, presented a lively and exciting spectacle to the visitor from the inland towns of Greece. In the age which preceded the rise of Athens, Ægina had been the foremost naval power on the Greek side of the Ægæan Sea. To the Æginetan traders was ascribed the introduction into Greece of gold and silver coin, and of a uniform scale of weights and measures. The wealth of individual citizens seems to have been enormous, and it was lavished on public objects and the encouragement of art and athleticism. Remembering Pindar's views on this point, we do not wonder to find him describing Ægina as the model state, in which, above all others, his ideals of life were realised.

The bold and commanding situation of Ægina, and the crowds of strangers who flocked to its hospitable port, seem to have produced a strong impression on Pindar's imagination. Thus he says in the Eighth Olympian—

> "Heaven's command draws the sons of every land
> Around this isle, set in the girdling main
> As a pillar sublime."

In the Fourth Isthmian he addresses Ægina as "a tower, walled of old with high-climbing virtues," and so in the Fourth Nemean he describes the island as the "towering throne of the Æacids," where justice is ever ready to protect the stranger, "the light of all men's eyes." Himself a Dorian, he greets Ægina as a typical Dorian state :—

"Our Dorian home
Ægina's hospitable isle."*—(S.)

"From Æacus down that land have Dorians swayed."†

He dwells with admiration and sympathy on the culture of the Æginetans, on their zealous and successful athleticism, on their prowess in naval warfare:—

"Who clash the spear and love the song,
Training their youth to love alway
The glorious fray."‡—(S.)

"Not banished from the Graces lies
His home, in all the virtues rare
Of Æacids that claimeth share.
No! from that righteous island's rise
Never-failing praise is hers, and songs her worth proclaim.
Oft have the heroes she has borne the crown of sportive contests worn,
Oft in rapid fight won fame."§

"Glad am I," cries the poet in the Fifth Nemean, "that all the state strives after glory;" and in the same Ode he calls the island, "a soil well loved of strangers, mother of valiant men, and glorious in ships."

At the beginning of the Persian troubles, when Darius invaded Greece, Ægina had disgraced herself by deserting the national cause, and associating herself with the foreigner. Consequently, when the invasion was over, Athens denounced the Æginetans before

* Nem. iii. 2.
† Ol. viii. 30.
‡ Nem. vii. 9.
§ Pyth. viii. 21.

assembled Greece, and the result was an invasion of the island by Sparta. But, in the renewal of the Persian attack by Xerxes, the Æginetans repaired their former fault by conspicuous devotion to the Grecian cause. Their island became the asylum of the expelled Athenians, and their splendid valour in the sea-fight at Salamis was rewarded, by common consent, with the first-fruits of the spoils. To this battle Pindar alludes in the Fourth Isthmian:—

> "Well may delivered Salamis attest,
> That by the might of Æginetan hands
> Old Ajax' city * stands."—(S.)

But the old enmity between Athens and Ægina broke out again after the close of the Persian wars. About B.C. 455 the Athenians besieged and took the capital of the island; and at last, in B.C. 429, they occupied the country, expelled the inhabitants, and terminated for ever the rivalry which had so long imperilled their own naval supremacy in Greece. This latter catastrophe, however, was after the death of Pindar. He lived long enough to see the downfall of many a noble house whose achievements he had sung; but he was spared the keener grief of witnessing the final ruin of his favourite Ægina.

Tradition derived the names of Thebes and Ægina from two sister-nymphs, Thebe and Ægina, daughters of Asopus. On the strength of this mythical connection, the Thebans had once actually invoked the Æginetans, as their next of kin, to join them in a war

* *i.e.* Salamis.

against Athens. Strange as it may seem, the appeal was successful; and the Æginetans—though at that time in alliance with Athens—responded first by sending to the Theban leaders the sacred effigies of their own native heroes the Æacids, and ultimately by themselves attacking the Athenians, without even waiting to make a formal declaration of war against them. Pindar alludes to this legend as a bond of connection for all time between members of the two states:—

"Great joy the loyal Theban fills
When thy high praise, Ægina, is his theme.
For twin were old Asopus' virgin daughters." *—(S.)

And in the Fourth Nemean he describes the men of Thebes as welcoming the young Æginetan athlete, Timasarchus, as "a friend among friends for Ægina's sake."

But the legends of Ægina, on which beyond all others he prefers to dwell, are those associated with its great heroic house, the Æacids:—

"A mighty spell my soul constrains,
Whene'er my step this glorious island treads,
With voice of hymns, like dewy rains,
To cherish the Æacid heroes' deeds." †—(S.)

And, in fact, in every single Ode which Pindar addressed to victors from Ægina, we find some mention of the house of Æacus, and usually a detailed account of some incident in its legendary history.

This Æacus was said to have been a son of Zeus

* Isthm. vii. 17. † ib. v. 19.

and the nymph Ægina, the most pious of mortals, and the first ruler of the island which bore his mother's name. Among his descendants were numbered many of the most famous heroes of antiquity—Peleus and Telamon, Achilles, Ajax, and Neoptolemus. The adventures of these supplied the poet with a copious stock of legendary material. He tells how Æacus assisted the gods Poseidon and Phœbus in building the walls of Troy; how Zeus and Poseidon—rival lovers of the sea-nymph Thetis—agreed to surrender her to a mortal husband, and selected Peleus as the mortal worthiest of such an honour. He describes the valour and untimely deaths of Ajax and Neoptolemus, the training of young Achilles in the cave of the Centaur Chiron, and the exploits by which he fulfilled the ancient prophecy that Thetis should bear a child more mighty than his father. And he dwells with especial pleasure on the tales which represented the Æacid Telamon as the chosen friend and comrade of the Thebans, Heracles and Iolaus, as foreshadowing the later alliances in war of the two sister-communities, Thebes and Ægina.

But to recapitulate in full all the countless legends of Ægina and the Æacids, as Pindar himself says, would but weary the reader.* A few selected passages will suffice to give us an idea of the poet's treatment of these stories in the various Odes which he has addressed to Æginetan victors.

Here is a strophe from the Third Nemean, describing the childhood of Achilles:—

* Pyth. viii. 12. cf. Isthm. v. 56.

"In mighty deeds the boy Achilles played,
Still homed in Chiron's fostering shade:
The steel-tipped spear he threw,
Swift as the wind the roaring lion slew!
He tamed the tusky savage of the wild,
Then laid each grim expiring brute
Down at the mighty Master's feet, and smiled.
So wrought the six years' child!—Diana mute
Beheld with wondering joy,
And great Athene gazed upon the wondrous boy."—(S.)

From Pindar's frequent enumerations of the same hero's later exploits we may select the following:*—

"Soon the voice of Bards with loud acclaiming
Told how by young Achilles slain,
Amid the vines on Mysia's plain,
The blood of vanquished Telephus was streaming.
He won Atrides' ravished bride,
He bridged wide Ocean for their safe return,
He dashed to earth the Trojan pride,
Which fain had curbed the prowess stern,
The spear which thundering from afar
Marshalled the mighty wave of dreadful war.
Fell Hector in the unequal fight,
Fell the great Memnon's swarthy might;
To many a chief of noble fame
He oped the gloomy gate of Proserpine."—(S.)

In the Fifth Isthmian, Heracles is described as visiting Telamon, and praying that a noble son may be born to his friend. Pointing to the memorial of his own supreme achievement, the hide of the Nemean lion which hung on his shoulders, he asks that the spirit of that mighty monster may revive in the child of

* Isthm. vii. 47.

Telamon. The prayer is heard, and Zeus sends down his messenger, the eagle, to betoken his approval. The child is born, and receives a name recalling the portent which heralded his birth—"Aias," *the Eagle*—a name more familiar to us perhaps in its Latinised form as "Ajax."

"'Twas at the Island-Chieftain's lordly feast
The high heroic summons came—
Stood in the portal high a godlike guest.
No need to name his name
Who wore the lion's hide, and brindled mane.
With eager cheer, and welcome fain,
Great Telamon the guest to greet
Reached forth a bowl of nectar sweet,
A bowl all beauteous to behold
Foaming with wine, and rough with sculptured gold,
And loudly bade the hero pour
The rich libation on the sacred floor.
His conquering hands he lifted high,
And called the Sire, the Ruler of the Sky.
'If ever from my lips, Paternal Jove,
Thou heardest vow in love,
Grant me, my chief, my dearest prayer!
Be born of Eribœa's womb a boy,
His noble father's noble heir,
And crown his happy lot with perfect joy!
His be the unconquered arm in fight,
Might, like this lion's might,
In Nemea's vale which my first prowess slew;
And as his might, his courage!'—At the words,
Swooped from the sky the king of birds.
With keenest joy his father's will he knew.
Then spake he in a prophet's solemn tone:
'The son thou cravest shall be thine,
And be his noble name, my Telamon,

Called from yon bird divine.
Wide as the eagle's be his monarch-sway;
Swoop he as eagle on his prey.'"—(S.)

Pindar describes with enthusiasm the exploits of Ajax in the Trojan war, and mourns over the hero's self-inflicted death. He had asserted his just claim to inherit the arms of Achilles. But the jealousy of the Greek chiefs and the cunning of Odysseus conspired successfully against the cause of right, and Ajax, baffled and maddened, fell upon his own sword :—

"'Twas bitter, envious hate
That on his buried sword great Ajax flung :
The hero strong of arm, unskilled of tongue,
Must bow to base defeat.
Artist of glozing lies, Laertes' son
The golden armour won :
The stealthy vote the dark injustice sped,
And baffled Ajax bled." *—(S.)

In the Seventh Nemean, Pindar's sympathy with Ajax leads him for once to question the veracity of Homer.† He hints that as the craft of Odysseus (Ulysses) perverted the judgment of Ajax's contemporaries, so have the ignorant public of a later age been misled by the craft of Homer. As in life, so after death, Odysseus has received more than his due, and Ajax less.

Further on, in the same Ode, Pindar alludes to the melancholy fate of Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, slain in a brawl with the priests of Delphi :—

"On the sacred floor
His blood the sworded priest 'mid the meat-offering shed."
—(S.)

* Nem. viii. 23. † ib. vii. 20.

But even this catastrophe, says the poet, was designed by Fate to add new glories to the house of Æacus. The murdered Neoptolemus received heroic honours in Delphi; his spirit thenceforth abode in the sanctuary, and presided as arbiter over the Pythian contests:—

"It was decreed
That in Apollo's ancient shrine
Our hero of the Æacid line
Should hold his bed divine.
So 'mid the blaze of many an altar-flame,
'Mid the high pomp and choral glee,
When the great Pythian combat came,
Should his high soul the righteous umpire be." *—(S.)

The famous myth of the nuptials of Peleus and Thetis appears frequently in these Odes:—

"High was that nuptial banquet, where, in pride,
Sat on their orbed thrones the Lords of Heaven.
The Lords of Heaven and Lords of Sea.
And gifts of power and sovereignty
By each great guest to his high race were given."†—(S.)

Apollo and the Muses appeared to sing the "hymeneal" chant:—

"The nuptial strain the beauteous Muses sang,
What time, amid the goddess-choir,
With golden quill Apollo struck the seven-stringed lyre."‡
—(S.)

In the Third Nemean, Telamon, brother of Peleus, appears as the friend of the Theban Iolaus:—

* Nem. vii. 44. † ib. iv. 66.
‡ ib. v. 41.

"He, comrade brave and true,
With conquering Iolaus slew
The steely-shafted host of Amazons."—(S.)

Æacus, the great ancestor of all these heroes, is introduced in the Eighth Olympian, in connection with the remarkable legend of the building of Troy. He came, summoned by Apollo and Poseidon, to aid them in this task. The assistance of a mortal was necessary, for Fate required that Troy should one day perish; yet perish it could not if it consisted wholly of the imperishable work of immortal gods. Accordingly, Æacus was summoned to supply a perishable element in the walls of the new city:—

"Foredoomed of Fate, from its embattled tower,
When war's fell affrays
Should in havock outblaze,
Ruin's lurid fumes to pour." *

Suddenly a portent appeared, shadowing the fate of Troy:—

"Up-leaped upon the city's new-built wall
Three sheeny snakes. Two back in ruin thrown
Crashed suddenly, and perished in their fall:
One rushed exulting on."

Apollo explained the portent. Descendants of Æacus should assault and take the city, breaching its walls in the only place where a breach was possible —the portion reared by his own mortal hands. By the two snakes which fell baffled from the ramparts Pindar appears to have signified the Æacids, Achilles

* Ol. viii. 33.

and Ajax. Each endeavoured to take the city—each perished before its walls. The third snake undoubtedly represents the son of Achilles, Neoptolemus, by whose assistance the ten-years' siege was at last successfully concluded.

And here we will, at last, take our farewell of the legends of the Æacids, and of the Odes to Æginetan victor in which they are embodied.

CHAPTER XI.

ATHENS.—CORINTH.—ARGOS.—OPUS.—ARISTAGORAS OF TENEDOS.

Remembering the tradition of Pindar's friendly relations with the Athenians, one is a little inclined to wonder that only two of his extant Odes, and those among the least important in the whole collection, are addressed to Athenian victors. Nor does it appear that any of the lost Isthmian Odes came under this category. It is probably useless to attempt an explanation of the circumstance; but it certainly deserves explanation, if such were possible.

Not less remarkable is the silence of these two Odes as to the stirring events of contemporary Athenian history. The Seventh Pythian, written apparently just after the great battle of Marathon, makes not the faintest shadow of an allusion to that crowning glory of Athenian history. And the Second Nemean, composed soon after the victory at Salamis, does, indeed, mention Salamis, but actually without a hint that the place was known to fame in any other capacity than as the birthplace of Ajax! Yet we know that Pindar was profoundly interested in the magnificent exploits of

the Athenians during their struggle against Persia. He can find no higher praise for Hiero's victory at Himera than to compare it with the Athenian triumph at Salamis. A fragment * has been preserved from a lost poem referring to an occasion "when the sons of Athenians laid the bright foundation of freedom for the Greeks." And in writing to an Æginetan victor,† he loudly applauds the part taken by Ægina in the fight at Salamis. But to Athenian victors he writes twice. Each time the Athenians were exulting in a great recent victory; and each time Pindar leaves the victory unmentioned.

We can perhaps explain his silence in the one case; in the other it must remain an unsolved riddle. The Seventh Pythian was addressed to Megacles, a member of the noble Alcmæonid family; and it was gravely suspected that the sympathy of this family with the expelled Athenian tyrant Hippias, who fought and (as some say) fell on the Persian side at Marathon, had not merely made them lukewarm in their country's cause, but had led them into actual treachery. Whether this suspicion was true or false, it produced a feeling of no little odium against the Alcmæonids; and the events of Marathon would naturally long remain a sore subject with members of the family, reminding them rather of their own discredit, whether deserved or no, than of the glory of their city. But as to the Second Nemean, we have no knowledge of the victor's family which will enable us to explain Pindar's obviously intentional silence on the subject of the sea-fight at Salamis.

* Fr. 93 (Boeckh). † Isthm. iv. 49.

In both Odes the element of mythology is conspicuous by its absence; and indeed neither Ode contains any feature of special interest, except, perhaps, the allusion in the Seventh Pythian to the restoration (in B.C. 512) of Apollo's temple at Delphi. Some exiled members of the Alcmæonid family, who had contracted to build its front with common Porine stone, substituted for this, at their own expense, a *façade* of costly Parian marble:—

"Ay, sounded are they through all the lands,—
Those labours of Erecthid hands,
On Pytho's steep divine
Rearing Apollo's shrine!"

The Second Pythian is the merest sketch of an Ode, and contains nothing that requires quotation.

Very unlike these trifles is Pindar's only Ode to a Corinthian victor, the Thirteenth Olympian, addressed to Xenophon, a member of the great aristocratical house of the Oligæthids, who had achieved a success which Pindar describes as unparalleled—victory both in the foot-race and in the Pentathlum.* This fine poem contains the principal account in ancient literature, if we except a passage in Homer, of the adventures of the great Corinthian hero Bellerophon. We hear how he toiled in vain to tame the winged horse Pegasus, till Pallas appeared in a vision and presented him with a golden bridle:—

"The powers of Heaven can lightly deign boons that
Hope's self despairs to gain:

* A combination of five distinct sports—as leaping, javelin-throwing, &c.

And bold Bellerophon with speed won to his will the
winged steed,
Binding that soothing spell his jaws around.
Mounting all mailed, his courser's pace the dance of war
he taught to trace,
And, borne of him, the Amazons he slew,
Nor feared the bows their woman-armies drew,
Chimæra breathing fire, and Solymi,—
Swooping from frozen depths of lifeless sky.
Untold I leave his final fall!—
His charger passed to Zeus' Olympian stall."

Other legendary glories of Corinth find place in this Ode—the invention of the *Aëtoma*, an important feature in Greek architecture; the introduction of the Dionysiac festival, and of the Dithyramb which accompanied it; the prowess of Glaucus, king of Lycia, a descendant of Bellerophon; the tales of Sisyphus and Medea. And the poem ends with a long enumeration of Oligæthid victories, and anticipations of others yet to come. At Nemea and the Isthmus alone they had triumphed *sixty* times! Pindar's statement is positive; but he feels that it sounds incredible, and appeals for confirmation to the sworn heralds who had proclaimed these victories. Yet this was not all.

"Well, ere now, my song hath told
Of their Olympic victories;
And what shall be, must coming lays unfold.
Yet hope have I,—the future lies
With Fate,—yet bless but Heaven still their line,
Ares and Zeus shall all fulfil! For, by Parnassus' frowning hill,
Argos, and Thebes, their fame how fair! And oh, what
witness soon shall bear,

In Arcady, Lycæus' royal shrine!
Pellene, Sicyon, of them tell,—Megara, and the hallowed dell
Of Æacids; Eleusis; Marathon bright;
And wealthy towns that bask 'neath Ætna's height;
Eubœa's island. Nay, all Greece explore,—
Than eye can see, you'll find their glories more!
Through life, great Zeus, sustain their feet;
And bless with piety, and with triumphs sweet!"

An extremely fine Ode, also, is the Tenth Nemean, to Theæus of Argos, the only champion from that city whose triumph is recorded by Pindar. As has been already stated, Argos was in ancient times one of the greatest powers in Greece,—unrivalled save by Thebes. Naturally her legendary memories were of especial splendour. Perseus and the Gorgon; Epaphus, the supposed founder of great cities in Egypt; Diomede, the Argive champion in the Trojan war—hardly inferior as a warrior to Achilles himself; Adrastus and Amphiaraus, one the leader, the other the associate-prophet, of the Seven Champions in the famous expedition against Thebes; Amphitryon, the step-father of Heracles, who had been trained in Argos to feats of arms;—such were the myths which at once presented themselves for the poet's choice, as he approached the theme of an Argive's victory.

None of these legends are neglected by Pindar, but he throws his main strength into another, and surely a most beautiful myth, connected, though remotely, with the family traditions of his patron, the myth of Castor and Pollux.

These heroic brethren were twins, alike in all points save one—Pollux was immortal, his brother a mere man. To save Castor from death, Pollux voluntarily resigned to him the half of his own immortality, and thenceforward the brethren passed alternate periods of life in heaven and death in the sepulchres of their native Therapne.

"To them in turn the lot is given
For one short day to taste the bliss of Heaven,
Guest of the gods around the throne of Jove;
The next, in dark Therapne's grove,
The silence of the tomb—the lot of man—to prove.
So blent in wondrous love, the godlike pair
One fortune share.
For such the lot immortal Pollux chose,
What time to his free choice 'twas given
To live the life of gods in heaven,
Or share his brother's woes."—(S.)

The struggle in which Castor fell is described with great vigour and picturesqueness of detail. The Twins were returning from a successful foray against their neighbours Lynceus and Idas, two brothers who in other legends appear as comrades of Jason in his voyage to Colchos. They lay down to rest beneath an oak, but Lynceus (keenest-eyed of mortal men) saw them from a distant mountain height, and hastened with his brother to revenge the raid. Castor was soon overpowered, but—

"Not long their triumph: on the twain
Came the dread wrath of Jove amain;
Jove willed: each warrior fell!
For deathless Pollux all afire

Rushed on the foe to wreak his vengeance dire.
They from the tomb, where lay their buried sire,
The pillared stone that decked the grave uptore:
And, as the dread avenger came,
The mighty mass—his speed to tame—
Full on his breast the brethren bore.
In vain! nor bruise nor blow the hero knew:
Nor might the huge and flying rock
One moment check the furious shock
Which pierced sad Lynceus through.
The bolt of Jove laid Idas low.
There lay the brethren dead in lonely woe."—(S.)

Pollux hastened back to his fallen brother, and found him in desperate case:—

"Not yet the thrall of stiffened death,
But shuddering with short gasp of weak and struggling breath."—(S.)

With passionate tears, Pollux besought Zeus to take back the cruel gift of immortality, and let him share his brother's death. The god appeared, and offered him another favour. Let him balance two alternative lots, and make his choice. If he would reign for ever as a god in heaven—so should it be!

"But if thou still
Art bent with fond fraternal care
Thy brother's lot in all to share,
I grant thy love its will:
Half of thy days to thee the lot is given
Deep in the silent earth to breathe
The dark and joyless life of death,
And half—to reign in heaven."—(S.)

"No doubt," says Pindar, "clouded the hero's mind." In an instant his choice was made, and forthwith

> "From Castor fell
> From eye and tongue the prison-bonds of hell."—(S.)

So ends this charming legend of fraternal affection, and with it the Ode reaches a worthy close.

Among Pindar's more important Odes must be reckoned also the Ninth Olympian, addressed to Epharmostus, a Locrian of Opus in Northern Greece. Four distinct Greek communities bore the name of Locrians, three in Greece proper and one in Italy. Opus, however, was regarded as the cradle of the whole Locrian stock, and its inhabitants claimed a certain pre-eminence among their brethren in consequence. Yet they never attained a position of much consideration among the States of Greece. Their country was rich and beautiful, but its inhabitants were little distinguished in the arts of war or peace. In the struggle against Persia their attitude was wavering and undignified. We find them first submitting to the invaders, then flocking to join Leonidas in Thermopylae, and lastly at the critical moment retiring from that dangerous post. The Locrians of Opus, however, were not without traditions of a glorious past which consoled them for their present insignificance. And naturally it is in these traditions that Pindar finds his chief materials for a paneggyric upon Opus.

The Ode was clearly intended as a specimen of the poet's best and most careful work. Pindar expresses, in its opening, his intention to produce a lay more

worthy of Epharmostus's triumph than the antique and simple strains of Archilochus, which had been deemed sufficient to greet it on the actual occasion of its achievement. And in a similar tone he proceeds to describe its purposed character :—

"His city dear will I adorn
With fiery songs of loudest strain.
Swifter than noblest courser borne,
Or sail-fledged ships that cleave the main:
Afar will I the tale recite.
If, Graces sweet, 'tis mine in humblest share
To cull the blossoms of your garden rare—
For yours is all that charms: and Heaven sends skill and might."

From this prelude he dashes at once into the world of mythology with a tale of "war in heaven"—Heracles resisting the combined assault of Apollo, Hades, and Poseidon. But the introduction of this legend is a "feint." The poet is purposely delaying the myths which are to form the real substance of the Ode, in order to introduce them at last with greater effect. And soon in one of his favourite bold transitions he reveals his scheme. "Quit such theme, tongue of mine!" he cries, and springs forthwith to the local legends of Opus,—the tale of Deucalion's deluge, and of the glorious reign of a mythical prince, to whom the Opuntian Locrians loved to trace the name of their city, Opus, the son of Zeus by a princess of Elis, who afterwards became the wife of the Locrian monarch Locrus. The following is Pindar's version of the well-known legend of Deucalion, who with his wife Pyrrha escaped the deluge

that had overwhelmed his contemporaries, and who, by casting stones behind him in obedience to the directions of an oracle, had peopled Locris with a new race called *Laians*, from the Greek word LAAS, "a stone."

"Where led of Zeus, that hurls the lightnings bright,
Down from Parnassian heights Deucalion came
With Pyrrha, Man's primeval home to frame,
And there, sans travail, won
Descendants sprung from stone,
'Laians' thence named. Let these inspire your voice;
And of old wine, but new-blown song make choice!
For earth, 'tis told in story, sank
Whelmed 'neath a dark and raging main,
But sudden, cleft of Zeus, she drank—
The swollen surge was pent again!"

Then follows the tale of Opus's birth, and of the heroes who flocked to his court, foremost among whom was Menœtius, the famous father of a yet more famous son —Patroclus, the friend of Achilles.

"Him that went
With Atreus' sons to Troy, sole faithful found
To wronged Achilles, when the fleet around
'Mid rout of valiant Greeks
Raged Telephus. Still speaks
His fame, and wise men know Patroclus' might
Thenceforth, amid the crash of furious fight
The son of Thetis bade him stand
The nearest ever to his side,
Sheltered of his victorious brand."

The poet professes himself willing to linger for ever on such themes; but the immediate occasion of the Ode must not be forgotten, and so he proceeds to enumerate the athletic successes of Epharmostus and his

kinsman Lampromachus, dwelling especially on one scene of triumph, which he seems himself to have witnessed.

"But oh, when now to manhood newly grown
He sought the silver prize in Marathon,
And there with footing true
And rapid feint o'erthrew
Each senior tried, what shouts rang round to greet
The fair young hero of so fair a feat!"

Lastly, Pindar enlarges on a favourite thesis of his philosophy of life, that glory is no external good to be grasped at by every chance aspirant, but the visible outcome of an innate capacity for greatness vouchsafed by Providence to certain favoured mortals. Ambition in inferior natures is presumption, a rash intrusion upon a sphere into which they have no right to enter. In contrast to such, Pindar describes the nature which may lawfully aspire to glory, and finds it exemplified in Epharmostus:—

"The victor, graced with blessings from on high,
Strong arm, lithe limb, and spirit-speaking eye,
Whose hand at Ajax' feast* the Ilian altar crowned."

We have now noticed all the extant Odes which Pindar has addressed to conquerors at the Four Great Games, and those also which—though really referring to successes in minor competitions—have been mistakenly included in the Pythian or Nemean group, and have thus by a happy accident escaped unmerited oblivion.

* The Ode was performed at a festival of the local hero Ajax, son of Ileus or Oileus.

We have to thank a similar accident for the preservation of the one extant Ode of Pindar which was not composed to celebrate an equestrian or athletic triumph — the so-called Eleventh Nemean — the Installation Ode (to which reference has more than once been made), for Aristagoras, "President" of Tenedos. Aristagoras had been in his day a distinguished athlete, and the frequent allusions of the Ode to his successes have occasioned the mistake which has preserved it.

The closing stanzas of this poem—like those of the Ninth Olympian described above—afford a specimen of Pindar's quasi-philosophical speculation on the problems of life. If the attainment of success be the result of an innate and inherited capacity for success, how comes it that the annals of a given family contain the record of failures as well as of successes? This difficulty Pindar meets with the favourite argument of poets — an analogy. The procreative capacities of Nature do not operate continuously through time: summer alternates with winter, fields lie fallow in certain years, blossom succeeds to bud, and fruit to blossom. So is it with the inborn gifts, which at stated intervals generate success.

"But not in every age successive born
Doth its full strength ancestral virtue show,
Nor year by year with crops of golden corn
Doth the rich furrow glow;
Nor are the laden trees unfailing drest
With their sweet burthen hour by hour,
Swoln bud and fragrant flower,
But all alike they own alternate wealth and rest.
E'en so alternate is the race of man."—(S.)

Thus does Pindar give a consolatory turn to the old simile of Homer, "The race of man is as the race of leaves." Other ancient poets adapted it to teach a gloomier lesson, the shortness and misery of life. This was all that Mimnermus * saw in it, when he expanded it into an elaborate and melancholy allegory; or Simonides, † when he applauded and quoted it in condemnation of the Fallacies of Hope. Pindar's doctrine is more cheerful, and more unselfish. He sees that the leaves fall, but he remembers that the tree will bud again. The individual aspirant to fame may fail, but the poet consoles him with the hope that he may live again in his descendants, and triumph in the reflected glories of their successes.

* Fr. 2 (Bergk). † ib. 85 (Bergk).

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

GREAT as was the contemporary success of Pindar's poetry, unanimously as the ancient and modern world alike have admitted his claim to rank among the most famous names of literary history, it may be doubted whether his works were ever really popular in any age but his own. It would be easy to prove by a long list of extracts from Greek and Roman writers, especially the latter, that his was a great name in the classical world: but it is surprising how seldom these laudations imply any real familiarity with the writings which are their subject, or even prove that their authors had ever read a single poem of the Theban bard. "The thunderous utterance of Pindar," "the Theban trumpet-blast," "the swan of Dirce," and so forth, were to them simply convenient periphrases for Lyric poetry in general, and their praises of his genius are expressed chiefly in a lavish employment of such epithets as "divine" or "sublime" or "inimitable." One or two Pindaric saws did indeed find their way into the commonplaces of ancient literature, and are quoted again and again by learned and unlearned

writers of every period. And certain obvious merits and characteristics of his poetry were pointed out by every professor of literature in the schools of Greece or Rome, and furnished a supply of materials for a panegyric, which any writer who chose could work up and expand at pleasure. But we find nothing to make us believe that Pindar was widely read among men of average culture among the ancients. When a poet is really popular in any age, the general literature of the age is certain to supply proofs of his popularity. Quotations, intended or unintended, from his works abound in the pages not only of rhetoricians and poets, but of philosophers and sober historians. The general interest in him is shown by unprofessional criticisms on particular details—often original and sometimes permanently valuable—which meet us from time to time in the most unexpected quarters. Nothing of this kind happens in the case of Pindar. Minute students like Dionysius of Halicarnassus * compile elaborate lists of the merits which a close and painful analysis has revealed to them in his writings. Rhetorical men of letters like Quintilian † favour the general public with a select edition of these catalogues, removing a portion of their technicalities, and presenting the residuum in a lively and striking form. But this is nearly all. Even the oft-quoted panegyric of Horace ‡ upon Pindar, with its famous images of the "mountain-torrent swollen by winter rains," and the "swan borne aloft by shifting breezes to the cloud-fields be-

* Dionys. p. 420 (Reiske's edition).

† De Inst. Or. x. i.

‡ Odes, iv. 2.

yond," proves only that Horace had grasped the current idea of Pindar's merits, and was acquainted with the Alexandrian classification of his poems. Horace's own poetry owes much to Greek lyrists of another school —to Alcæus, and Sappho, and Archilochus—but little or nothing to Pindar. And the rare occurrence and universal failure of any attempt to revive the forms of Pindaric poetry in Latin literature needs more explanation than is supplied by Horace's parallel between the imitator of Pindar and the rash Icarus "soaring on wings of wax." No risk of failure would have deterred the poets of Rome from imitating a really popular Greek classic. Homer's name stood higher with them than even Pindar's; but Homer was popular, and therefore he was imitated.

We need not wonder that then, as now, the fame of Pindar should have exceeded the popularity of his poetry. Whatever elements of permanent value that poetry may contain, it contains also, beyond question, much which could have little value for any but its original audience. In so far as it appealed to sentiments which were peculiar to its own age, and which succeeding ages were neither able nor desirous to revive, it diminished its power of interesting and attracting future readers. That kind of genius which consists in an intense perception of the spirit of its age, and in responding promptly to its demands, tends often actually to disqualify its possessor for posthumous popularity. And having found that Pindar possessed this kind of genius in an extraordinary degree, that he was able and willing to throw his

whole soul into the expression of thoughts and the satisfaction of aspirations which were the very life and breath of his own generation, but of his own generation only, we see precisely in this fact the explanation at once of his success and of his failure. Over the minds of his contemporaries his influence was unequalled; but the very qualities which attracted them, repelled—and still repel—the men of other ages.

Still more does Pindar surrender his prospects of an abiding popularity, when—as sometimes happens—he addresses himself deliberately, not merely to the peculiar spirit of his times, but to developments of it which were limited to a select few in even a contemporary audience. How could poetry remain popular which its author designed to be

> "Of meaning to the wise, but to the horde
> Dark riddles"? *

Yet we find, amid all our poet's obscurities, passages which seem to demand immortality,—thoughts into which all minds can enter, passion which all hearts can feel, beauties which all eyes can see. Soon, it is true, the spirit of his age reasserts its influence: and the theme which was inspiring him with poetry that should have been "a joy for ever," is abandoned in favour of some topic of absorbing interest to himself and to his audience, but of none to "them that come after." Yet an impression remains of amazement at the powers which have for a moment been revealed:

* Ol. ii. 85.

and as we realise what Pindar's poetry might have been, we scarcely venture a criticism on what he has chosen that it should be.

The quality in that poetry which seems to have most impressed the ancients, is one of which a modern reader and a foreigner can scarcely judge. Nor, probably, should we be inclined to accept their estimate of its importance. They praised him chiefly as "the most sonorous of poets." * Such a quality was no doubt all-important as long as his poetry retained its original connection with Music and the Dance, but hardly longer; and as it must necessarily disappear in the process of translation, it cannot be a recommendation of the Odes to an English reader. Some idea, however, of Pindar's mastery over the mere form of poetry can be derived even from translations. His extraordinary rapidity in conveying his conceptions to his audience, the ingenuity with which he finds—if we may borrow an expression of his own—the shortest cut from one thought to another;—these, though they may begin by perplexing us, will assuredly end in pleasing us. Nor can we fail, in the end, to admire his fearless grasp of details from which an ordinary poet would shrink, the calm confidence with which he sets himself to present the most prosaic and unpromising facts in new and striking lights, so assured of his power to be sublime, that he has no fear of a lapse into the grotesque. We cannot but smile to hear a cloak described as "a warm specific against cold

* Athenæus Deipn. xiii. 17, and many writers in the "Anthology."

winds,"* or a pot of oil as "the olive's produce pent in fire-scorched earth;"† but where we see incongruity, Pindar's audience saw sublimity, and there is something heroic in the poet's confidence that so it would be. The same may be said of many another daring phrase in his Odes, as where he speaks of smoke that "kicks"‡ against the sky, or personifies an apology as "Excuse, the child of Afterthought,"§ or bids Hiero "forge his tongue on the anvil of truth,"‖ or describes the remembrance of his own ancestry as a "whetstone shrilling at his tongue."¶ A poet who dares to speak thus, shows a confidence of his power to make language produce a desired effect on his audience which must command admiration, if the result proves that such confidence was well founded. And in the case of Pindar, his contemporary reputation supplies this proof.

Pindar's rapidity is not an unmixed advantage. Often, before his readers have grasped one thought, he hurries them to another and yet another, so that —like travellers whirled in an express train through fine scenery — they receive impressions which are neither clear nor permanent. But sometimes he presents an idea so vividly that it cannot fail to arrest attention; and in such cases, the rapidity with which he produces his effect is a distinct element in our enjoyment of it. Thus, in the Fifth Olympian, in his picture of the new settlement at Camarina, he makes a few brief phrases serve for pages of description, and

* Ol. ix. 97. † Nem. x. 35. ‡ Isthm. ii. 114.
§ Pyth. v. 27. ‖ ib. i. 86. ¶ Ol. vi. 82.

the rapidity with which the details are suggested only makes the impression more distinct. And sometimes the effect of a particular scene is heightened by contrast with the hurry of surrounding passages, as, in the Sixth Olympian, the beautiful details in the picture of the deserted babe Iamus are set off by the rapid hints of the confusion in the palace, the hurried departure of Æpytus for the Delphian oracle, and the scene of triumph and congratulation at his return. Further, in the moral and didactic portions of his Odes, Pindar's power of expressing ideas rapidly appears in the form of a sententious terseness, well calculated to arrest the attention and to impress the imagination of his readers. Thoughts which are fine in themselves appear yet more imposing when embodied in language concise and pregnant as the utterances of an oracle. And even where his thought is trivial, it is often expressed with a felicitous point and brevity that present truisms as epigrams, and fallacies as at worst ingenious paradoxes

The accounts of particular Odes in our previous chapters will, it is to be hoped, have convinced the reader that mere command of style is not the only merit of our author's poetry. His conception of the character of Jason* is surely at once original and noble, and it is developed through a succession of scenes with a consistency and dexterity which imply no small dramatic talent. Pindar has been charged with exhibiting in his poetry a certain coldness, and want of human tenderness, — not indeed peculiar to

* In the Fourth Pythian Ode : see chap. ix.

him among ancient poets, and to some extent a consequence of the nature of his subjects, but still certain, more or less, to repel a modern reader. Yet the author of 'The Christian Year'—no mean judge, surely, on such a point—in devoting no less than three of his Oxford "Prælectiones" to prove that Pindar's is in the highest sense a genuine poetic nature, dwells with emphasis on the poet's sympathy with human life in its successive phases, his sense of the charm of infancy, the grace of youth, the vigour of manhood, the serenity of age. Nor certainly is Pindar blind to the more pathetic aspects of humanity—its transitoriness, its sorrows, its ignorance, its moral frailty—and he is ever eager to discover a reflection which may console the sufferer.

"What are we, great or lowly? Creatures of a day!
Man's but a phantom dream. Yet in the gracious ray
Poured from on high, his life puts joy and glory on." *

"Hiero, thou know'st — for known to thee is all tradition's lore—
How, for each blessing gods bestow, they add a double share of woe:
Fools may not brook its weight, but wise men find
The threatening cloud is silver-lined." †

"What is gone
(Came it of right, or maugre right) is none,
No! not Time's self that brought it, can reverse!
Yet all may be forgot in happier hours;
For blessings new destroy the primal curse." ‡

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* Pyth. viii. 94. † ib. iii. 80. ‡ Ol. ii. 15.

He loves to exhibit the compassion and forgiveness of gods for sins of oblivion or heedless rashness. * Filial and family love is elevated above the sphere of physical instinct, and becomes a divine inspiration, which can triumph over the fear of death, and even over death itself.† With a grief too great for consolation, the poet will at least express a sympathy—

"Ah me! the speechless woe I felt." ‡—(S.)

Yet no doubt the usual tone of these Odes is jubilant rather than pathetic, and occasionally the poet's exultation indulges itself in a sort of grim humour at the expense of a defeated rival, which might expose him to a charge of heartlessness. We do not quite like to think of Pindar's audience laughing over his picture of the baffled competitor, slinking home by back lanes to avoid the jeering of his comrades; § and prefer the morality which he elsewhere inculcates, the lesson of the Ancient Prophet of the Sea—

"Who bade mankind full praise bestow
E'en on the prowess of a noble foe." ||

A similar tone of sarcasm may perhaps be detected in a passage of the Seventh Isthmian, which tells how Memnon and Hector and many another champion were "*directed to the house* of Persephone,"—*i.e.*, in plain terms, slain—"by Achilles." But we cannot be quite sure how the phrase would strike a Greek audience. The sense of the ludicrous varies from age

* Ol. vii. 45-50, 30, 77.
† Pyth. vi. 30-39; Nem. x. 75-90; Ol. viii. 79, 80.
‡ Isthm. vi. 37. § Pyth. viii. 80-87. || ib. ix. 97.

to age, and one generation is amused where another is impressed.

The profusion of metaphor in Pindar's poetry is remarkable, and his analogies are often happy in the extreme. Sometimes, however, they strike us as strained, and not unfrequently (it must be owned) as commonplace. Some notion of his resources in this respect might be conveyed by a list of the objects to which from time to time he compares his own poetry. Among them are flowers, dew, honey, wine, gold, ivory, coral, palaces, merchandise, winds, paths, sandals, chains, and so forth *ad libitum*. He speaks of himself, in figures drawn from the sports which he describes, as wrestling with his theme, as hurling his dart beyond those of all competitors, as launching his quoit fairly without overstepping the "touch-line." Now he is shooting arrows that strike but never wound, now he is rearing a storehouse filled with costly treasures, now he is outdoing the statuary's art by the creation of images that move and breathe, now he is ploughing the fields of the Muses, now he is preparing medicine for the athlete's hurts or a bath to refresh his weary limbs. Much of all this, no doubt, is trite now, and was not new then. Pindar is fond of asserting his originality, but probably his claim refers rather to the employment of his materials than to the selection of them. Still, if the quality of his metaphors does not always impress us, we cannot but be struck by their mere profusion, and the boldness with which he handles them.

The rapidity of language, which is so marked a

feature in Pindar's poetry, by no means proves a corresponding rapidity in its production. Pindar has sometimes been represented as a sort of *improvisatore*, dashing off his Odes at lightning pace, with much natural and acquired skill, but little or no reflection. Such a view, however, though it has been maintained by competent critics, seems at once unsupported by evidence, and improbable in itself.

It cannot be proved by appealing to the amount of poetry produced by our author, and inferring from this the rapidity of its production. Much as he undoubtedly produced, it may be calculated with some probability that the extant Odes amount to at least a sixth of all his published poetry.* But let us suppose the total mass far greater than this, and allow that, for every poem catalogued by the industrious librarians of Alexandria, another may have existed of which all their research had failed to discover a trace. Still the probable amount will fall far short of that which many Greek authors, and notably the great Athenian dramatists, are estimated to have produced. Yet it has never been suggested that these authors sacrificed finish to rapidity of production. A long life, devoted solely to his art, would have surely afforded to a poet of Pindar's talents ample space for the composition, without undue pressure, of a very large number of Odes and Hymns and Dithyrambs. The mere extent of his poetry, then, proves nothing.

* By "published" is here meant, produced and performed at public or family gatherings.

Again, if we consider the nature of a Choral Ode, and the manner of its production, it is *a priori* improbable that such works could have been composed on the spur of the moment. The mere necessity of writing with a view to the musical and spectacular effects of the composition would demand care and reflection, —unless, indeed, the poem was to be a mere *libretto*, which—as has been pointed out in the first chapter —was certainly not the case.

Or if we examine such occasional evidence as is contained in Pindar's actual Odes, there is little to support the theory of rapid production. The Odes were generally composed for celebrations held long after the victories which they commemorated. Sometimes the poet speaks, in one Ode, of another which he has temporarily laid aside, or which he has begun to plan, but which will not for some time be ready; and we gather, on the whole, that it was his practice to ponder over a theme, and to wait for inspiration, rather than to force it. One Ode *was* apparently produced on very short notice, and Pindar makes a merit of this, which he would hardly have done had it been his practice. Once at least, also, we find him designing and promising a particular Ode; and then, long after, sending the Ode promised with an apology for the delay. True, his apology at first sight bears out the view which is here questioned. "I forgot," he says; and it may doubtless be urged that a poet who spent much previous thought upon his poems would hardly forget in such a case. But it is not impossible that the excuse was a mere poetical artifice,

designed to introduce certain protestations of friendship which are ingeniously attached to it. We can hardly imagine that a patron, whose commission had been really neglected, would be appeased by hearing that the poet had forgotten all about him. And on the whole it seems quite conceivable that the offence and the apology are equally mythical; that the Ode was never expected to follow immediately on its predecessor, but was commissioned for some later celebration of the victory; and that, in short, Pindar's protestations merely come to this,—"How could I leave such a triumph a single day unsung? To think that I should have gone on with my Pæans and my Dithyrambs, and only now be framing an 'Epinicium' for Agesidamus!" *

As to the admitted rapidity of Pindar's style, this seems to be absolutely without bearing on the question. That which reads quickly need not have been quickly written. On the contrary, where many ideas are conveyed in few words, the presumption is that the compression results from additional labour. Abruptness may be studied. A daring phrase may be the last result of a careful deliberation, and be

* With a precisely similar artifice, Shakespeare's Duncan increases the effect of the honours which, at the earliest possible opportunity, he has lavished on Macbeth, by an affectation of shame at not having bestowed them sooner:—

> "O worthiest cousin,
> The sin of my ingratitude even now
> Was heavy on me: thou art so far before,
> That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
> To overtake thee."—*Macbeth*, Act i. sc. 4.

introduced after anxious and repeated weighing of its probable effect. The unexpected desertion of a theme does not prove that the poet's fancy is really wandering free from the restraint of his judgment; it may result from that last refinement of art—the concealment of its presence.

The more we examine the apparent carelessness and freedom of Pindar's fancy, the more the certainty grows upon us that here are not the vagaries of improvisation, but the studied artlessness of a consummate artist. If he quits a topic abruptly, we find, on reflection, that he has not quitted it *prematurely*—not till it has served the purpose of its introduction. If in a chain of argument or narrative he seems to let drop an occasional link, the links in question are just those which the audience can spare; and their omission is sometimes an actual gain in point of vigour and suggestiveness. If he seems to ramble heedlessly into an alien topic, it appears in the end that the supposed digression has led him to the very point at which he has from the first been aiming. There are in most of these Odes passages whose obscurity, or abruptness, or extravagance, or slightness of detail, might well seem the result of haste. But we find on examination that these are no unconscious lapses of a rhapsodist whose tongue outruns his thought. Not only is Pindar aware of the qualities of these passages, but he calls attention to them with an eagerness which is the only trace of *naïveté* displayed by him in the whole matter. He boasts that he is obscure—his poetry is meant to baffle "the general;" that he is abrupt—he cannot waste

time in following "the beaten track." And if at times he makes an apology which is almost a boast for the vagaries of his genius, and protests that he has lost his way among the winding cross-roads of poesy, or has been swept from his theme like a vessel reeling amid the shifting gusts of a storm-wind, these professions of negligence will hardly impose upon a reader who observes that the poet sees his own irregularity, proclaims it, and profits by it—that the traveller is aware of his deviation from the path, and reaches home the sooner—that the vessel sets her sails to catch the side-winds, and is all the earlier in port.

One point, however, Pindar has in common with the Improvisatore. Each starts with, as it were, a ready-made assortment of thoughts, images, phrases, derived from early education in his profession, which supply the crude material of his poetry. Neither, if we may be allowed the figure, creates the threads of which he spins his web. But the Improvisatore cannot even pause to select his materials, or to ponder on their arrangement; he must take them as he can get them, and dispose them in such order as the impression of the moment suggests. This is inevitable when the work is really being produced against time. Pindar, on the contrary, however he may affect to work without a plan, is master of his work from first to last; he exults in this mastery, and exercises it with all his might, grudging no labour and no thought which he can expend on its exercise. He may say, like Shakespeare's Antony, "I only speak right on;" but we can see that it is not so. His selection of his

themes is deliberate; the form which he gives to them is all his own; and its originality is the result of conscious and even anxious self-criticism. Poetry which has been evolved with little thought, whatever the skill or genius of its author, gains little from a microscopic criticism. If its thoughts and its language are beautiful, its structure coherent and complete, these merits will reveal themselves to the full in its first impression upon the reader; and any defect in these points will be made, by a minute analysis, yet more apparent. Precisely the reverse is the case with Pindar's poetry. His finest thoughts and most felicitous phrases will not produce their maximum of possible effect till the reader has studied them in a variety of lights, till he has pondered on their immediate context, their relation to the leading ideas of the poem in which they occur, their appropriateness to particular circumstances of the occasion on which that poem was produced, the special memories and associations which they would suggest to an audience of Sicilians or Æginetans or Thebans. At first sight, again, an Ode of Pindar's exhibits but little trace of that astonishing internal structure which is revealed on a closer scrutiny —elements apparently the most incongruous, woven by mutual interpenetration and by subtle threads of connecting thought into a coherent and indissoluble whole. The more minute our scrutiny becomes, the more elaborate appears the structure which it reveals, and the more incredible do we find it that such a structure could result from hurried and unreflecting labour.

It is wholly impossible, within the limits of the present work, to attempt more than the most brief allusion to the light which the Odes of Pindar throw on the moral and theological ideas of his day. The reader who wishes to pursue this most interesting subject will find, in an admirable treatise by a modern German scholar,* a full and systematic exposition of the poet's Philosophy of Life in all its branches. He will find that it is possible to gather into a remarkably complete and coherent body of doctrine the numerous moral maxims and religious speculations which are scattered through the Pindaric Odes, composed though these were at varying intervals in the course of a long life. In this respect, as in others, Pindar's intellect seems to have reached its full growth prior to the production of his earliest extant poem. As an artist, his conception of his art, and the technical processes by which he produced his effects, were practically the same at every stage of his career—unmodified either by development from within, or by influences from without. As a theologian and a moralist, he seems in like manner to have adopted early, and once for all, a comprehensive and consistent theory, which remained thenceforth the background of his whole religious and ethical teaching.

Space only remains to indicate in a few words a single phase of this philosophy,—the view involved in it of *success within an appropriate sphere* as the true aim and ideal of every noble life.

* Buchholz, Die sittliche Weltanschauung des Pindaros u. Æschylos. Leipzig: 1869.

Starting from the principle that deity is the highest and best conceivable state of existence, but a state which is unattainable to frail humanity, Pindar finds the *summum bonum* of man in the nearest practicable approximation to the divine state. Prowess and wisdom he considers as the two qualities which bring man nearest to the gods. Continual progress, then, in one or both of these respects, constitutes the perfection of a human life; and the zeal or ambition which prompts such progress, is a divinely implanted instinct or grace in every worthy human soul.

But this progress must consist, not in the acquisition from without of prowess or of wisdom, but in the development from within of such germs of these qualities—inherited, or at any rate innate—as exist in a man from his birth. To one man the gods who rule our destinies give capacities of prowess, to another capacities of wisdom; and these in different measure, and capable (in each case) of expansion up to a given limit, and no further. Legitimate ambition encourages a man to develop his peculiar gift up to this point; and another spiritual grace, discretion, enables him to recognise the limit, and to curb ambition within it.

In strong contrast with this, the only true progress is the attempt to win an artificial excellence by straining after those gifts of prowess or wisdom, which the gods withhold from the unworthy aspirant. Presumption in such a man takes the place of legitimate ambition, and urges him onward to a point at which infatuation is waiting to hurl him into destruction.

Such is the general outline of the doctrine. We pass to some of its special applications.

Athletic eminence is a special development of those capacities which are included under prowess. Not every man, therefore, may lawfully seek it; but to seek and to achieve it, proves that the seeker has found his true sphere, and is succeeding in it. The competitions at the great games furnish a test which distinguishes the born champion from the presumptuous charlatan. Concrete victories are, as it were, the fruits by which the tree is known. The gods are careful that the prizes shall fall to no unworthy aspirant. A victory, then, at Olympia or the Isthmus, proves that the winner has found his true sphere, and is exercising within it, at the prompting of a noble ambition, gifts of inborn prowess, which are daily bringing him towards the point where his nearest possible approximation to deity will be realised. Further let him not seek to press. "Seek not to become a god!" *

Other and similar capacities of progress are implied in the divine gifts of power and wealth. The culmination of power is kingship; and the ideal king is one whom legitimate ambition carries forward to the attainment of such greatness and magnificence as he may lawfully achieve, and whom, on reaching that point, discretion arrests, and occupies with the consolidation of his power, and the enjoyment of a cultured and dignified leisure. The capacities, again, which the gods give with the gift of wealth, are developed by a generous and public-spirited employment of that

* Ol. v. 56.

wealth; and equestrian victories are among the most conspicuous tokens that such a development is taking place, and that the lord of wealth, with the favour of heaven to back him, is making such approach as his lot allows towards the divine life.

Wholly apart from these, yet equally leading by another road in the direction of divine perfection, is the progress which Pindar considers to be his own especial duty, the development of his own especial gifts. This is the progress in wisdom, which—no more than prowess—can be obtained by unauthorised effort, however charlatans may persuade the foolish herd that they have obtained it. True poetic eminence stands to the gift of wisdom in much the same relation as athletic eminence to that of prowess. Neither is attainable save by special favour of heaven. To win either, a man must possess an inborn gift, must develop it under the influence of legitimate ambition into its due proportions, and must learn from discretion to know his limit and observe it. Convinced that such a gift has been bestowed on himself, Pindar regards his poetry as a sacred trust, which it should be the work of his life to improve by diligent and prudent use. To glorify worth, to condemn evil,—these are to him solemn duties, imposed upon him from his birth; to fail in them would be a disloyalty to the laws of his being. Zealously then, and with many a prayer for divine help, he strives to fulfil his trust. But with all his zeal he recognises a limit at which discretion must arrest him. He dares not

"stain his speech" with boastful falsehood nor with seductive flattery; he dares not exalt human worth in terms which encroach upon the prerogatives of gods. Nor must his denunciations of evil carry him beyond his limit. "I saw the portion of the slanderer Archilochus," he cries—"I saw, and I held aloof!" Such is the ideal of the true poet's life, which Pindar strove to realise. And with it he contrasts the vain struggle of its spurious counterfeit towards successes which it can never achieve, its endeavour to substitute an artificial lore for the true poetic gift, the grossness of its flattery, the malice of its censures, and withal its pitiable failure. When all is done, what are the spurious pretenders, and what is the genuine poet whom they envy and assail? They, the loaded nets, dredging in deep waters;—he, the buoyant cork, unscathed by the brine! They, the paltry crows, chattering in pairs over their absurd pretensions;—he, the glorious eagle, soaring in lonely grandeur above their heads.

In the ancient legends of Greece, of which, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, all choric poetry as a matter of course availed itself, Pindar finds abundant materials for illustrating and enforcing his philosophy of life. The development into a truly noble life of inborn prowess impelled by legitimate ambition is sketched in the story of Pelops. The character of Jason shows us the same qualities, and calls our special attention to the discretion which should accompany them. Observance of the due "limit" is

described as the crowning virtue of the Theban hero Iolaus. The lavish yet discreet employment of wealth and material prosperity is exemplified in Pindar's legend of the early settlers in Rhodes, and in many brief allusions to old-world worthies—Crœsus, Nestor, Sarpedon, Cinyras. The due development of inborn wisdom is traced in the myths of Iamus and Amphiaraus. On the other hand, Pindar finds in many a legend warnings against a misuse of natural gifts, or a presumptuous departure from a natural sphere. Ixion and Tantalus illustrate the ruin which attends a wrong and presumptuous use of prosperity; Asclepius perishes because he has used his gift of wisdom without discretion;—not content to heal the sick, he has raised the dead to life. These instances are but a few out of many. Pindar rarely misses any opportunity which the details of his legends offer, of calling attention to a point of his philosophy. The heroic qualities of his heroes are traced to their "inborn nature," their feats are performed at the bidding of "noble zeal," "high ambition;" if they fail, it is because they have miscalculated their measure, and discretion has not restrained ambition from degenerating into presumption.

The same doctrines are carried by Pindar into the sphere of politics. Holding that greatness is an inborn and inherited gift, he naturally sympathises with hereditary monarchies and aristocracies of birth, and is unwilling to see political power committed to a "greedy host" of plebeians. But he does not consider

any form of government as wholly fatal to the development of political excellence. Even in a democracy inborn worth will assert itself and prosper; and Pindar always urges his aristocratic patrons to assert their superiority over the mob by a display of princely virtues and by lavish munificence and hospitality, never by grasping at political privileges, or appearing in the character of "saviours of society," to disturb the balance of a democratically constituted state. Pindar has little in common with such advocates of extreme oligarchical pretensions as the Megarian poet Theognis. He never exhorts a prince or a noble to regard the populace as a natural enemy, who should be overreached and repressed and ill-treated on principle. On the contrary, he applies his theory of "measure in all things" to teach to monarchs and aristocracies lessons against all undue assertion of their prerogative. An ideal ruling class, as he conceives it, is marked out for power by the possession of a natural influence and authority over inferior natures. Legitimate ambition develops this potential greatness into actuality, and discretion confines such ambition to its proper sphere, and guards against those abuses of power which provoke sedition, and often end in the disasters of a revolution.

But now—for we, too, must observe our "measure" —the time has come to take our leave of Pindar. We have learnt (it is to be hoped) to see in him something more than Voltaire's "poet of the prize-ring." We have formed some idea of the qualities which have

earned him his fame—the dignity of his style, to which Gray alludes so finely:*—

> "The pride and ample pinion
> That the Theban eagle bear,
> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air,"—

its dazzling rapidity and force, sketched no less finely by a modern poetess:†—

> "Bold,
> Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
> The race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
> Slant startled eyes, that seemed to hear
> The chariot rounding the last goal,
> To hurtle past it in his soul."

We have recognised in him also the possession of other poetic gifts, with which his critics have not always credited him, and have seen that Pindar is no mere panegyrist, but the exponent of a philosophy of life which he genuinely believed it was his mission to proclaim to his contemporaries. If space permitted, it might be shown that Pindar, in his doctrines of "natural capacity" and "the due measure," anticipated some of the most characteristic and suggestive speculations of later Greek philosophy, and prepared men's minds for such a treatment of moral questions as we find in the 'Republic' of Plato or the 'Ethics' of Aristotle. But it would be hopeless within these limits even to hint at a discussion of these matters. And here we may

* Gray, Ode V., "The Progress of Poesy."
† Mrs E. B. Browning.

close our survey of Pindar's life and works with a last quotation, showing us what the poet desired that his life and works should be, and what was the memory of himself that he would fain bequeath to later ages :—

"Grant me, O Jove ! each crooked path to shun,
Simple and straight my honest race to run !
So may mine be
No name to tinge with shame my children's cheek !
Gold, lands, let others seek ;
I ask an honoured grave,—the good to adorn,
And load the vile with scorn.' *—(S.)

* Nem. viii. 35-39.

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